

Communication in Action

Dynamic Teaching of the
Language Arts

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Kean College of New Jersey



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To George, who always encourages and helps

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Foreword

I have followed the career of Dorothy Grant Hennings for a number of years with sustained interest in her frequent professional contributions. I was delighted to read her newest book, *COMMUNICATION IN ACTION: DYNAMIC TEACHING OF THE LANGUAGE ARTS* in manuscript form and to have the opportunity to write the foreword.

First, let me say that Dr. Hennings has chosen an excellent style. Her work is concerned with *communication* in broad perspective, rather than with a traditional, narrow approach to language arts instruction. Second, I like the comprehensive nature of Dr. Hennings's treatment of the field. For example, unlike most books dealing with the language arts, there is a thoughtful treatment of the implications of communication skills for special education. This is particularly important during an era when many educators and parents are realizing that *all* education needs to be 'special' in the sense that learning experiences are modified in terms of the uniqueness of each child and personalized accordingly.

Also worthy of note is the careful preparatory work which went into *COMMUNICATION IN ACTION*. Research sources were carefully consulted, and I know from personal study of the manuscript during its development that the author invested long hours of personal effort in its preparation. Furthermore, many in process revisions and improvements were made from day to day as the book took its final form. In short, Dr. Hennings has made an excellent presentation of the field of communication and the language arts and at the same time managed to escape the tedium which sometimes diminishes the usefulness of longer textbooks.

As a person reading the book before its publication, I also was impressed by the credibility and authenticity with which the material was written. This is important since it reflects the author's actual classroom experience in addition to her review of relevant research conducted in secluded library carrels.

I would like to make two additional comments with respect to *COMMUNICATION IN ACTION*. First, while the book is carefully based upon a knowledge of current research, it is more than nearly contemporary. It also tends to anticipate certain changes in language instruction which, as a long time student of the future of education, I believe the next ten to twenty years will bring. Second, I was impressed by the clarity of the author's style. Murky phrases and high flown 'pedagugese' which might conceal meaning or lead to ambiguous interpretations carefully have been avoided and as a result the prose is lucid throughout.

A number of years ago as an undergraduate, I recall how students evaluated their textbooks. There were some that you hastened to cash in at the used book counter when a course had ended. Then there

were others that you retained because you valued them as resources to be used and prized. We called these books 'keepers.' I still have a few of them that I have retained since college days. I think that COMMUNICATION IN ACTION qualifies as a 'keeper.'

Harold G. Shane
University of Education
Indiana University, Bloomington

“What a delightful thing a Lobster-Quadrille is
First form into a line along the sea-shore
Advance twice each with a lobster as partner
Advance twice set to partners
Change lobsters and retire in the same order
Throw the lobsters as far out to sea as you can
Swim after them
Turn a somersault in the sea
Change lobsters again
Back to the land again
A found poem adapted from a description in
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll



The purpose of language is communication. This statement contains a truth so obvious and simple that one can easily overlook it in planning language arts experiences for children, yet, in thinking about the language arts and English in the elementary school, educators must begin with the relationship between language and communication. It is this fundamental nexus that gives direction to language arts teaching. If language serves to facilitate communication, then language arts instruction must serve the parallel function of heightening children's ability to use and interpret language for purposes of communication.

Children in language arts programs need to be fully involved in the communication process. They require active involvement in thinking through and sharing ideas in both oral and written form, they require complete immersion in receiving and thinking about ideas that others are sending. Through direct involvement in communication in action, youngsters build and refine their language skills, extend their functional vocabularies, gain in ability to formulate ideas that are at the heart of the communication process, and develop understanding of the power and limitations of language as a medium of communication.

A Dynamic Language Arts Because communication is essentially a fluid process with ideas heard and read triggering the production of additional and related ideas to be shared, in designing and structuring language arts programs it is impossible to look upon the traditional language arts areas—thinking, speaking, listening, reading, and writing—as separate curricular experiences. The more effective and logical approach to helping children develop communication skills is to organize a program in which language arts are integrated into the total curriculum and are taught in conjunction with one another and the subject content areas. In an integrated language approach, one aspect of communication flows smoothly and naturally into others with no artificial boundaries separating them. Children talk and write about thoughts read and heard, they read to find out, enjoy, and share, they talk out before writing about, they share original written work by dramatizing, telling, showing, they work together orally at composing, revising, punctuating, capitalizing, and spelling activities.

In this kind of classroom environment much time is spent in listening and speaking together. These are interactive processes requiring direct contact among people, which in schools can occur both in small groups and class-sized groups where most members participate. Through group interaction children meet new ideas and the words to express those ideas, they have opportunity to clothe their own thoughts in words and share developing notions with others, and they acquire fundamental oral communication skills. With the recent trend toward personalized and independent study activity, the importance of group interaction may have been understressed. To understress it, however, is to underplay the

pivotal place of oral communication both in language learning and idea development

Obviously there is a place for independent study in language arts programs. The open classroom movement has willed a legacy of creative approaches through which to personalize learning. In designing classrooms for creative teaching-learning, teachers must think in terms of learning stations and centers where a child works on purpose-filled tasks that are geared to meet personal language needs and through which a child "creates himself without reference to what his 'average' chronological age-mates may be accomplishing." The language center where several interrelated tasks have been gathered is a flexible tool for building personalized and integrated experiences into the curriculum. A youngster who has thought, listened, talked, written as part of a class group can move into independent reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking activities set up in specially designated classroom areas. Ideas and products that germinate in language centers feed back into group sessions where they are shared and where they flower.

Classrooms in which group communication flows into independent and personalized activities are dynamic places to teach and learn. Relationships among activities and among ideas are constantly being developed. Children have the opportunity to make choices from among learning center options. They make contact with diverse learning materials and are involved in a variety of oral and written language activities. A dynamic classroom is one characterized by high levels of involvement and energy, of what the physicists call *effective action*. Forces are not in equilibrium in dynamic classrooms, for each experience generates new ideas, products, directions for further explorations, and "away we go" again!

Literature occupies a primary place in a dynamic language arts, especially since a major goal of language teaching is to bring children and books together. Children can listen to, react to, talk about, write from, dramatize and pantomime out of, as well as read books. For this purpose, the best of story, poem, and nonfiction should fill the classroom so that children can read for the sheer pleasure of it and so that books can become stepping stones into further curricular experiences. Other vehicles for developing dynamic language experiences are television shows, films, live performances, tapes, discs, newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets, as well as the commercials and advertisements that are part of the message communicated through these media. The nonprint media have special importance in today's classrooms, particularly in a world where they are gaining prominence over print. The fine literature available and the numerous resources of filmed and taped materials, newsletters, and magazines designed especially for children leave little excuse for restricting learning in classrooms to textbooks and accompanying workbooks. The new future will provide even more compact technology so that vast amounts of information will be at children's fingertips via computers, which are becoming so cheap that one could conceivably be connected to each classroom learning center and drawn upon when needed.

Available to the language arts teacher too is a growing body of information about the nature of language, language learning, and language

differences Especially in the last score of years language scholars or *linguists*, have been studying the essential characteristics of language the way sentences and words are generated, the relationship between language and its graphic representation, the way meanings are communicated, the origin of language Although much of this sophisticated information is far too complex to serve as content in elementary schools the information is a guide for making decisions about language teaching and developing methods of instruction

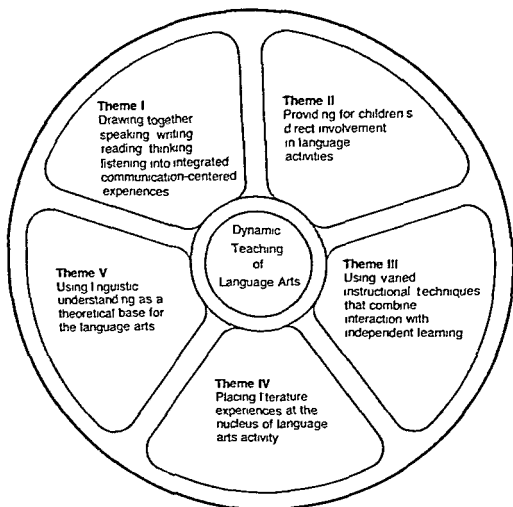
The Approach of COMMUNICATION IN ACTION COMMUNICATION IN ACTION DYNAMIC TEACHING OF THE LANGUAGE ARTS has been designed and written to incorporate the five major themes discussed above

THEME I a stress on integrating the various elements of the language arts (listening, speaking, thinking, writing, and reading) into communication-centered experiences, while at the same time allowing for skill development in each area In COMMUNICATION IN ACTION you will find that each chapter identifies specific skills and appreciations to be learned and presents activities to achieve these learnings significant background information, and related sources of information Additionally, because some of the best language arts instruction occurs when students are involved in multifaceted experiences in which listening, oral expression, thinking, writing, and reading blend each chapter title serves primarily as an organizing feature, it is the starting point for activities that move out into other language areas Thus although you will find traditional title headings such as on writing and listening the way these areas are handled within the chapters is considerably broader than the headings suggest

THEME II a stress on practical and creative ideas easily translatable into classroom activity in the language arts Dynamic teaching connotes effective action, and the way to achieve full and productive involvement is through sequences of experiences that are varied, capture the imagination, and draw upon the full range of materials currently available Because creative teaching learning ideas are so essential COMMUNICATION IN ACTION provides numerous examples of classroom activities These examples take two forms anecdotal descriptions and thumbnail sketches Detailed anecdotal descriptions, generally found at the beginnings of chapters, show how a particular teacher orchestrated an activity sequence in the classroom These descriptions are essentially exemplars or models, oftentimes showing how a number of small activities can coalesce into what might well be called a *language arts quadrille* They explain how such an activity sequence can be conducted, they can be used as models after which a teacher can create, with children, related but original happenings In contrast, the thumbnail sketches located at the ends of chapter sections, are short They supply hundreds of specific beginnings from which to initiate dynamic classroom activity

THEME III a stress on using varied instructional techniques that combine extensive oral interaction with independent, personalized learning In COMMUNICATION IN ACTION, there are ideas for brainstorming, oral composition, valuing, and experiencing together In addition, there

FIGURE 0-1 Theme Components of a Dynamic Language Arts Program



are ideas for designing small group activities and for structuring learning station activity. Where necessary, specific directions and practical suggestions for producing learning station task cards are given. These serve as models for those readers wishing to experiment with writing original learning station direction cards.

THEME IV—a stress on literature as language arts content to be used in both developing a love of reading and designing literature-based language experiences. In *COMMUNICATION IN ACTION*, chapter 3 introduces the literature resources that should be available to children in elementary schools. Since many examples cited are Caldecott or Newbery Award winners or honor books, through this section you will meet some of the best-known titles. In addition, within all the chapters, books are there, providing a springboard into language happenings. This scheme can be termed a *literature-language experience approach*.

THEME V—a stress on using the body of information developed by the linguists as a guide for designing language activity. Chapter 2

presents an overview of some of the understandings basic to language arts teaching. In later chapters as you think about ways to teach children to write skillfully and ways to bring them into contact with their language system you will find detailed explanations of how these understandings about the nature of language determine the structure of activities you develop with children.

The Organization of the Book For ease in use the book has four sections. Part One is an introductory chapter that sets forth a design for a dynamic language arts in elementary schools. It describes how to develop a language arts program in which classroom language experiences are built upon an oral language base, a program in which literature and language experiences blend, one where there is opportunity for language explorations. Part Two, comprised of chapters 2 and 3, presents basic concepts about language and literature as they relate to language arts instruction in the elementary schools. Here you will find information about communication channels and the social function of language, the ways children respond to literature, the qualities inherent to good children's literature, and the instructional potential of books.

The next eight chapters are organized as Part Three. Each focuses on a fundamental learning area within the language arts: listening, oral sharing, thinking, talking, and writing together, creative thinking and writing, skillful writing, language understanding and usage, spelling, handwriting, dictionary use, and reading. From this part you will discover how to bring communication into action in an elementary classroom.

Part Four, the concluding chapter, illustrates how the design for teaching language arts set forth in previous chapters can be implemented to take care of the needs of all children: the gifted, the slow, the language different, the sensorily impaired, the speech handicapped, the emotionally disadvantaged, and of course the average.

To guide your reading, **COMMUNICATION IN ACTION** provides three kinds of reading clues or *keynotes* located in the side margins. First are the *goal notes* indicated by arrow shapes. Located next to anecdotal descriptions of classroom sequences, goal notes give the learning related purposes of activities, the why of it all. Second are the *instructional notes* indicated by school desk shapes. These provide related material to use in designing similar activities: children's books, films, word lists, examples. They may also supply cautions, hints, and instructional cues. Third are the background *reading notes* indicated by book shapes. They provide references to books and articles for personal reading that amplify ideas being discussed at that point. Location of a note tells where that material fits into the total language arts education picture.

To guide you in thinking about and trying out ideas at the end of each major chapter section, **COMMUNICATION IN ACTION** also supplies a selected group of activities through which to build and refine teaching skills. Most readers will not attempt them all. If you are reading this book as part of a college level course, workshop, or internship program, your instructor will probably help you select items to try. If

← keynote

☞ no new ones now

📖 reading notes

you are reading it independently as a way to make your language teaching more dynamic, you may want to experiment with some of the ideas in your own classroom. Certainly in designing and carrying out language arts sequences with particular groups of children, you will have to modify the suggested ideas, for no group is exactly the same, each requires sequences structured to meet its unique personality, levels, and interests. Indeed, unless you adapt the ideas to your classroom situation, your degree of success will not be so high as that in the classrooms described.

Appreciations As you read *COMMUNICATION IN ACTION*, you will quickly perceive the author's indebtedness to the hundreds of elementary teachers who have shared ideas with her. Teachers like Jacqueline Shemanski in chapter 1 and Barbara Woods in chapter 4 are real people who modified ideas they originally encountered with the author in a graduate seminar in language arts, later resharing the results. Other teachers you will meet are composites of several the author has observed during school visits. From real teachers in action, the author has created people like Henry Dag and Eileen Morris, who have their counterparts in a number of teachers who are attempting dynamic language arts teaching. Then there are all the teachers who have contributed samples of children's work incorporated into this book. Particularly appreciated are the contributions of Lois Nichols, Emilia Muglia, Ursula DeRosa, Judy Bradshaw, Rosylyn Falduti, Theresa Quinn, Sally Kowalski, Cheryl Zampano, Elyce Baumwoll, Marilyn Centnarski, Deborah Battiato, Pat Zbranak, Libby Thall, Mary Jaye, Natalie Krietzmann, Karen Donavan, Anita Toth, Pat Stakiwicz, Josephine Soncuya, Rosanna Whittman, Virginia Shedd, Kay Amoroso, Mary Brennan, and the contribution of Mr. Heinz, principal of the Campbell School in Metuchen, New Jersey. A thank-you is also extended to colleagues who have shared ideas. Lillian Lemke was most generous in this respect, contributing ideas on the teaching of manuscript writing, as well as ideas for storytelling and for converting spelling instruction into games.

The author sends sincere thanks to Dr. Harold Shane, University Professor of Education, Indiana University, to Dr. Leo Schell, Professor of Education, Kansas State University, and to Maxine Vaught, Assistant Professor, University of Arkansas. All commented in detail on a first draft of the manuscript and provided invaluable suggestions. The author appreciates too the encouragement given this project by Joel Deutser and Charles Heinle of Rand McNally College Publishing Company. It was their encouragement that prompted the author to begin writing *COMMUNICATION IN ACTION*. In a like vein, the author recognizes with deep appreciation the editorial guidance given the project by Holly Heim of Rand McNally Special, special thanks go to Dr. George Hennings, Professor of Biology, Kean College of New Jersey, who read preliminary drafts, edited copy, and checked proofs.

As you read *COMMUNICATION IN ACTION*, you will note also the influence of Lewis Carroll. Although Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* are children's classics that

have endured through the decades, Carroll has much to say to the adult reader as well. *Alice* reminds you of the importance of wonderland for children, the importance of

Dreaming as the days go by,
Dreaming as the summers die

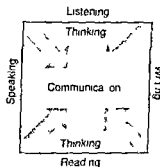
Ever drifting down the stream—
Lingering in the golden gleam

Alice reminds you of the wonderland of words that surrounds children, a wonderland where Alice could ask, "Why did you call him Tortoise, if he wasn't one?" and The Mock Turtle could reply, "We called him Tortoise because he taught us." The sounds, shapes, and meanings of words dance through *Alice* and across *The Looking Glass*. Lewis Carroll knew all about word magic. He played with onomatopoeia, portmanteaus, the structure of language, puns, and sound plays, making the adult reader smile deeply in realization of the marvelously creative vehicle for communication language is.

A particularly beguiling part of *Alice* is the lobster quadrille given at the start of this section. In Lewis Carroll's lobster quadrille, dancers form a line along the seashore, set to, retire, change partners, throw, turn somersaults. As teachers design integrated language arts experiences, their job is really to create language quadrilles — communication sequences in which children join as actively and fully as the lobsters, seals, turtles, and salmon joined Carroll's fantastic lobster quadrille. Through active, involved participation in the communication process, children grow in ability to use and interpret language.

Dorothy G Hennings
Warren, New Jersey
January 1977

A Language Quadrille





Part 1

a design for a
dynamic
language arts in
elementary
school

Chapter 1
Teaching the Language Arts
Knowing How to Begin

Striking the drum placed on the floor before her chair, Eileen Morris kept a steady beat as she repeated

Pease porridge hot
Pease porridge cold
Pease porridge in the pot
Nine days old

Some like it hot
Some like it cold
Some like it in the pot
Nine days old

After just one speaking by the teacher the fourth graders joined the voice chorus and simultaneously maintained the beat by striking or shaking the rhythm instruments previously distributed

Upon completion, the teacher turned to the youngsters on her left "Will you be the ones who like pease porridge very hot? As we repeat the rhyme, you keep chanting very hot very hot very hot At that point the *hot team* discussed what body action could be added in pantomime fashion to communicate some meaning of the poem The youngsters decided that stirring would be appropriate, and so as the remainder of the class spoke the lines of the rhyme and maintained the beat with the rhythm instruments those in the smaller *hot team* chanted "very hot" while making stirring motions with their arms



getting a feeling for the rhythms of language



Rhythm band instruments being used to interpret the rhythm of language

Then the teacher turned to the youngsters on her right. These youngsters became the *cold team*, deciding to inject a tasting motion as they chanted "very cold, very cold, very cold." Now the whole chorus was ready. As the left group stirred and chanted "very hot," the right group tasted and chanted "very cold," and the remainder chorused the words of the now familiar rhyme and maintained the beat with the rhythm band instruments.

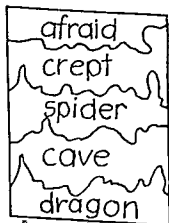


expanding vocabulary to
use in speaking and
writing

After the children had repeated the rhythmic play several times, they thought about how porridge nine days in a pot would taste. Students offered words like *smelly*, *rotten*, *gummy*, *hard*, *sticky*, *goosey*, *stinking*, *buggy*, and *foul*. With the aid of a classroom thesaurus, the children added words like *distasteful*, *unappetizing*, and *unpalatable* to a chart entitled "Nine Day Old Words." And then they talked very briefly of why people in the past might have had to eat nine day old porridge. They played with the meaning of *pease*, which defied dictionary solution but was open to figuring out. They decided that the word might be a lengthened form of *peas*, which was in the dictionary and fit the meaning of the verse. In talking together, both the youngsters and Ms. Morris used *unappetizing* and *distasteful* to describe the experience of eating old porridge.

A Taste of Oral Composition. Eileen Morris abruptly shifted her focus. "In the coming week," she announced, "we are going to be playing with Story Building Towers. To show you what we will be doing, we'll compose one Story Building Tower as a group." Quickly she reached down into the Mystery Bag. Slowly her hand emerged filled with five puzzlelike pieces, one for each of five children. They held up the pieces so all could see, then came forward; on the floor at the hub of their Communication Circle they put the Story Building Tower together, fitting one piece against and above the next so that it looked like this:

Story Building Tower



Drawing on the words in the order printed on the Story Building Tower, the fourth graders orally composed a story in which each sentence "sat directly on the one that came below it in the tower." One youngster named Donna served as scribe to write on the chalkboard the sentences that the class cooperatively composed. Prompted by the teacher's questions, the youngsters created a story and then returned to "jazz it up." They added some adjectives to make the story more interesting, substituted forceful words for less striking ones, deleted unnecessary words, and even added a phrase or two to make the action flow more smoothly. They read the story orally and corrected the punctuation to reflect vocal pauses and changes in intonation. Finally they suggested possible titles and voted on one they liked best. The edited changes and the title were inserted by the scribe. Donna erased, crossed out, and added until the class had a draft of which they all approved. Here is that draft with its revisions.

← developing story making and story revision skills

TIMID THE DRAGON

One day there was a ^{timid} dragon whose name was Rudolph. He was looking for ^{a place to hide} ~~adventure~~ and ^{came upon} ~~saw~~ a deep, dark cave. As the dragon ^{tiptoed cautiously into} ~~entered~~ the deep, dark cave, he saw a creepy spider hanging down ^{from roof} ~~the entrance~~. Rudolph ^{suddenly feeling brave,} ~~crept up beside it,~~ and the spider landed on his nose. The dragon was afraid, Rudolph ^{yelled} ~~let out~~ a big scream, whacked the spider off his nose, and ran all the way home.

THE END

One youngster volunteered to make a clean copy later in the afternoon so that the story could be included in the Big Book of Cooperative Stories, a continuing class production in which stories were written out on large sized paper. A second volunteer to take the Big Book to the kindergarten the next morning to read the story to the little ones.

← gaining handwriting practice in a meaningful context

Ms. Morris distributed mystery envelopes to all the fourth graders. The envelopes were sealed as befitted a mystery. Ms. Morris explained that each contained the parts of a Story Building Tower and that during the next writing session the children would open their envelopes and figure out their Towers. Then they would compose an adventure story based on the story ingredients with the Towers later pasted alongside the final versions of the stories.

← figuring out word relationships

A Language Game. Since the youngsters were becoming restless from concentrating intently on their oral composition and revision, Ms. Morris shifted mood and direction. Let's play the adjective and adverb game that we learned during our last Yellow Ball Afternoon, she proposed. The youngsters smiled their approval, so Eileen Morris

printed a sentence on charting paper posted on a nearby easel A
_____ horse ran _____ The children recalled
that any word that would fit in the first slot between the determiner
and the noun was an adjective and on construction paper they listed
words that sensibly could fit in the slot After only a minute of rapid
writing—and those youngsters wrote quickly because they had played
this game before with a different test sentence and knew they needed
many many words—they placed their cue card papers on the floor
right in front of them Then the game began

One child started a nonstop rhythm achieved by slapping the left
hand on the left leg then the right hand on the right leg then snap-
ping the left fingers and finally snapping the right fingers At the
snap of the left fingers a player had to say an adjective to fit in the
slot, then at the snap of the right the word *horse*, without breaking
the rhythm In the order in which they sat each youngster took a turn
as the rhythm of slapping and snapping got faster and faster The
rule was You can't repeat a word already given, and you must
maintain the rhythm — or you're out When the rhythm had passed
around the Communication Circle several times with only a few
misses the group turned to adverb play Now they prepared cue cards
containing words that could fit into the adverb slot of the sentence and
played the game by saying the word *ran* on the snap of the left fingers
and an adverb on the snap of the right Once more the game action got
fast and furious as youngsters added a multitude of adverbs *ran*
slowly ran here, ran wildly ran away and so forth

And Now the News! Eileen Morris next sequenced-in a brief quieter
activity before the students turned to independent and small group
tasks Each week two students in the class volunteered as News
Reporters The news reporting job consisted of keeping abreast of local
and world news and sharing key happenings with the class Now the
News Reporters from their spots on the Communication Circle told
briefly of one recent happening an airline disaster Other young peo-
ple who had seen film of the incident on the evening news added
information some added comments about the causes of these disas-
ters Finally one youngster who had recently taken a jet trip became
the Expert and interjected firsthand comments

Branching Out The class was ready to disperse for personalized
study They worked in small groups on a forthcoming dramatization
task, with the teacher in a group concentrating on words containing
the long *a* sound when spelled *igh*, and individually on their original
Tower Stones and on tasks indicated on their personal study guides
hand sized charts that they were using to guide their individual lan-
guage activity during the week Before the youngsters dispersed the
teacher reviewed the options they could pursue and the items they
had listed on the study guides Each youngster's guide was slightly
different from any other's although some specific activities were com-
mon to all as shown in the sample The common items were ones
designed to increase fundamental skills and understandings while the
different items were activities geared to meet individual differences

FIGURE 1-1* An Individual Study Guide

Name	<u>Juan Agillo</u>	Week of	<u>February 4</u>
Independent Reading	<u>And Now Miguel</u>	Date Started	Date Completed
Independent Writing	<u>Compose a Tower Story. Cross-edit with Tom</u>		
Writing Station Activity	<u>With Bruce, write a "Nine Day Old Story" filled with powerful words</u>		
Recording Corner	<u>Read a paragraph from And Now Miguel on the tape. Choose an exciting one that others would enjoy.</u>		
Other Station Activities	<u>Word activities? Meet More Homonyms. Work on your Spanish dictionary for English speakers with your dictionary writing team</u>		
Other Independent Activities at Your Desk	_____		

In Eileen Morris's fourth grade classroom, independent learning tasks typically flow out of periods of intensive oral language activity. On some afternoons, similar to the one described, the initial oral language experience is a potpourri of diverse activities designed to achieve a wide range of fundamental communication skills and language understandings. On others the session activities are more focused revolving around a central theme or topic from natural or social science investigations under way, arising out of a shared experience with story or poem, or approaching a single language goal from several directions. But, regardless of how diverse or focused the activities may be, initial emphasis is on speaking and listening to one another.

Building Classroom Experiences on an Oral Language Base

Language specialists recognize the primacy of oral language, contending that *spoken* language is *language* in the true sense of the term, with writing being the symbolic representation of speech sounds. They explain that people communicate most of the time through speaking and listening and very little of the time through reading and writing. They explain that listening and speaking are the channels through which children first encounter language and learn to use and interpret language for themselves (Wilkinson, 1970).^{*} For these reasons, teachers like Eileen Morris structure oral language activity as the keystone



of all classroom experience, whether that experience be with mathematics, social studies, science or literature. Most of the learning sequences they structure are "situations in which language production is a natural outcome" (Wilkinson, 1970), situations that begin with a listening-speaking time or have a major oral component. Independent reading and writing are built upon this oral language beginning and oftentimes result in further oral language activity.

The Purposes of Oral Language Experiences in Classrooms. Research on language acquisition indicates that generally by age three and a half or four and a half years, children have gained control of fundamental ways of handling their language. Most youngsters can produce oral utterances in all the basic sentence patterns and ones in which the basic

^{*}Shortened in-text references are cited in full at the end of each chapter in which they appear.

patterns have been transformed in a variety of ways (Menyuk, 1964) Early the child acquires rapid control over language structures through listening to patterns and creating original utterances with those patterns as he/she speaks In this respect, language development requires continued oral language involvement

From Oral Language into Reading and Writing Listening and reading are interrelated processes — so closely related, in fact, that oral language activity paves the way toward eventual reading facility Summarizing the work of psycholinguists such as Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith, Robert Shafer (1974) explains that the task of the reader is similar to that of the listener both must go beneath the surface of the communication to interpret underlying sentence structure and assign meaning to messages received Furthermore both the listener and the reader are involved in finding meaning in words, words are after all the warp of communication even as sentence structure is the woof Most of the words that a child understands come through listening and oral production The more and varied contacts a child has had with spoken words the more meaning he/she will bring to words met on the printed page Sounds too are part of our language system Learning language, the child gradually finds meaning in combinations of language sounds Linguists call the individual speech sounds like /b/ *phonemes* In speaking the child relies on a combination of phonemes to communicate meaning and in reading the child interprets the written representation of those speech sounds — the *graphemes* — and assigns meanings As Shafer (1974) so aptly summarizes the “child learning to read is an active seeker after meaning in all communication situations” The same is true of the fully functioning listener

The relationship between oral language skills and reading has been investigated extensively In a longitudinal study in which he traced the language development of 338 kindergartners for numbers of years, Walter Loban (1963) found a positive correlation among speaking, listening, reading, and writing facilities youngsters who had little oral language ability tended also to have little ability in reading and writing Ruth Strickland's classic study (1962) of the language growth of 575 elementary school youngsters also provided data on the impact of oral language development on other skill areas She found that oral language facility bears a strong positive relationship to overall academic achievement

This relationship extends as well to written expression Russell Stauffer and John Pikulski (1974) instituted an instructional program in which oral expression was a key component First graders in this language experience program had almost unlimited opportunity to dictate stories orally, to hear stories and poems to see words from their own stories all around them in the classroom, to reread stories they themselves had created Children's dictations reflected a wide variety of interests “The Mousetrap Game,” “A Magnifying Glass,” “The Puppet Show,” “Lincoln and Washington” were just a few of the titles about which one boy dictated Words like *high heeled, dumplings,*

passenger, salad, shelter were representative of those included in oral expression. Some sentences dictated were

Fall is here I like fall Squirrels are gathering nuts The leaves are falling and turning red and other colors

Later the children's stories were analyzed "Significant improvement was found along all dimensions of oral language usage evaluated — number of words to the sentence, number of sentences, number of different words, number of different prepositions, number of different pronouns, and so forth

Richard Ammon (1974) clarifies the relationship between oral language and writing. By listening and by generating oral responses, the child 'will gain a storehouse of words and sentence structures. In addition, the practice of generation also enables the learner to select the precise word or phrase needed for clear, concise expression. Oral training in generation directly improves speaking and writing."

Because oral language development is a significant factor in children's ability to interpret and produce written language, oral activity should have a fundamental place in the elementary child's schoolday. Listening and speaking in a variety of contexts about a variety of subjects should occupy many classroom hours. By stressing oral language, schools are building a foundation for all other curricular experiences — building a base for word power, reading, writing, spelling, study of grammar and usage patterns, as well as for study of the content areas like science and social studies.

Thinking with Language Classroom time spent in oral language activity, moreover, affords youngsters opportunity to think out loud. Vygotsky (1962) has analyzed the relationship between thought and speech. According to Vygotsky's analysis, "thought and speech have different roots." Up to a certain point in child development, thought and speech follow different lines and are essentially independent. But at a certain moment about age two, the lines of development meet. The child "makes the greatest discovery of his life" that "each thing has its name." As Vygotsky explains

This crucial instant, when speech begins to serve intellect and thoughts begin to be spoken, is indicated by two unmistakable objective symptoms (1) the child's sudden, active curiosity about words, his question about every new thing "What is this?", and (2) the resulting rapid saccadic increases in his vocabulary.

From this point on, verbal language and thought are linked "thought becomes verbal and speech rational" (Vygotsky 1962 pp. 43-44).

Because words give form to ideas, not only does thinking affect language outpouring, but conversely language may affect thinking. And because language and thinking are parts of the same whole, classroom oral language activity builds both language and thinking abilities. Specifically, as children orally recall, relate, describe, summarize, hypothesize, invent, judge, they are refining their ability to think logically.

cally, simultaneously they are acquiring the language patterns and vocabulary to communicate facts generalizations, descriptions, hypotheses, judgments, and creative ideas In this respect, *oral language time* is a *thinking time*

The Range of Oral Language Experiences. There is a vast range of oral language experiences through which students in elementary classrooms can develop and refine listening, speaking, and thinking skills, as well as build a foundation for independent writing and reading activity. Four categories of experiences are

- 1 *Oral encounters with story and poem*, specifically
 - listening to stories and poems shared by the teacher, by fellow students, or by an expert recorded on tape, disc, or film,
 - sharing stories, jokes, riddles, poems, and so forth through expressive telling,
 - taping stories, jokes, riddles, poems, and so forth,
 - dramatizing and pantomiming,
 - choral speaking and individual oral interpreting of a variety of rhythmic and nonrhythmic selections
- 2 *Oral composition and dictation*, specifically
 - oral composing in teacher-led groups with or without recording,
 - oral dictation by an individual child as a scribe records the dictation,
 - composing in small groups as one student records the thoughts,
 - editing in groups or in pairs
- 3 *Discussion and informal talk*, specifically
 - Reacting orally to a variety of stimuli: films, flat pictures, televised material, newspaper and magazine articles and advertisements, books, events of the classroom and so forth,
 - Sharing informational content and ideas with others
- 4 *Language play*, specifically
 - playing together orally with the sounds meanings, shapes, spellings, functions of words,
 - brainstorming words to find ones to use in writing,
 - playing orally with sentences expanding, shrinking, transforming, and generating original sentences

These oral language experiences are primary activity categories that belong at all levels of elementary education from preschool upward

From Oral Activity into Independent Activity. In an oft-quoted article written in 1970, Andrew Wilkinson writing in the *English Journal* makes a plea for greater stress on oracy in school programs By *oracy* Wilkinson means ability to listen and speak In the past much stress has been placed on *literacy*, the ability to read and write with ease Although these areas of language ability are vital, oral language skill is especially important today when people receive much language input orally and must react to it

The Neglect of Oracy Some instructional techniques contribute to the neglect of oracy in the schools One is the duplicated exercise sheet In



See Andrew Wilkinson
The Concept of Oracy
English Journal 59
(January 1970) 70-77

some classrooms as early as first grade, children spend most of the day completing a series of mimeographed or ditted pages from an exercise book. Each morning, the teacher explains the sheets to be completed during the day, and then, while the youngsters go to work quietly at their seats on the assigned tasks, the teacher attends to reading, spelling and/or arithmetic groups to develop particular competencies. Although the children may work for about 20 to 30 minutes with other youngsters and the teacher in a reading group, since many of those minutes are occupied with silent reading, little time is actually spent in oral language activity.

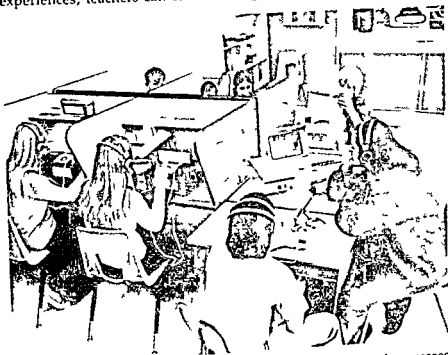
Newer techniques inherent in completely individualized programs may also lead to neglect of oracy. In a program of completely individualized instruction, children work by themselves at tasks geared to their own learning problems and interests. In one school, for instance, children go throughout the day to an immense bookcase where there are stacks of tapes, booklets, and activity cards — all color-coded and labeled. Each youngster selects the booklet, tape, or card at the skill level at which he/she is functioning. A booklet may contain reading selections followed by questions to be answered, a tape may contain a listening selection with questions to be answered on an accompanying sheet, a card may contain a motivational paragraph to trigger creative writing or several activities with a series of related spelling words. Whatever the format or the content, oftentimes the tasks are solitary ones requiring little group interaction and providing little opportunity for oral give-and-take.

Learning activity geared to the interests and abilities of pupils should certainly be encouraged, but need not contribute to the neglect of oracy. Indeed, group oral language experiences provide a fine base upon which personalized activity can be constructed. From a time of intensive oral activity children can move in different directions determined by their unique needs. Those who require more time to master a spelling pattern already met in a group session can move in that direction, others who have quickly mastered the pattern but who enjoy play with the sounds of words can create special sound effect poems in which the sound just encountered recurs. Still others who have been refining their reporting skills work together preparing information and ideas for eventual presentation to the total class.

The Learning Station The learning station is an instructional framework that can be used to relate personalized study to oral language activity. A learning station is a place where children study on their own or in small groups, completing an activity outlined on a task card located in the station. Here are all materials necessary for completion of the task and in some instances, a correcting guide so that children who have finished the task can immediately identify areas requiring further attention. Because learning stations are set up in classroom corners, perhaps in alcoves created by setting file cabinets or bookshelves perpendicular to the wall or along walls so that students face a bulletin board or chalkboard area and because learning stations generally remain functional for numbers of days, tasks can include work

with a variety of materials and equipment silent filmstrips and film-strip viewers, silent filmloops with projectors, audio-tapes and tape recorders, flat pictures, realia, scissors, paste, paint, flo pens. In some instances several children can work together on a learning station task and several tasks outlined on different task cards can be set out on one alcove table, on the floor in a corner, or on a bulletin board next to which a table has been pushed to create a work surface. In the latter case, we sometimes term that classroom area where several related tasks are assembled a *learning center*.

Language Centers To facilitate movement from oral language experiences into personalized independent activity derived from the oral experiences, teachers can establish language centers at which young



Personalized learning that takes advantage of new technology

sters work at their own pace on tasks that relate to ideas and processes encountered orally. Possible centers are

- 1 An Interest Reading Nook set apart from the rest of the room by a protruding bookshelf on which there are books galore to read for pleasure. In the Nook should be a comfortable chair or two into which pleasure readers can curl up to enjoy.
- 2 An Interest Talk Corner where two or three youngsters can gather for follow-up discussion of points raised in large group session or for sharing pressing concerns of the moment.
- 3 A Language Production Center where tasks are set up that focus on creative thinking, writing, speaking and artistic production. This center presents numerous creative production tasks, each in a separate plastic pouch or box. Less structured tasks are also completed.

here, for example, several youngsters can work together on writing and illustrating a literary magazine or a picture storybook, using the production facilities available at the center. In one Scotch Plains, New Jersey, classroom, these facilities include not only the typical collection of scissors, crayons, paper, brushes, and ink, but also a laminating machine and a small printing press.

- 4 A Language Skills Center where tasks focus on the refinement of spelling, handwriting, reading, listening, and language usage skills. Materials such as word and sentence cards manipulated during group Yellow Ball times are placed in this center to be remanipulated by individuals to provide further practice on the skills. Spelling and reading games, special handwriting practice materials, and tapes and tape recorders for use in focused listening are also located here.
- 5 A Language Activity Center where tasks relate to the structure of language and help young people develop understanding of the way their language works. This kind of language center gains in significance about grade four, when youngsters study grammar in a more systematic way.

As noted earlier, these language center experiences generally are outgrowths of group activity. Through group activity children are prepared to pursue the tasks on their own. They acquire necessary background skills and understandings, and, especially in the lower grades, they learn what it is they will be doing at specific stations and even how to manipulate the hardware, the viewers and projectors, that are part of the activities they will try.

From Independent Activity into Oral Activity. The tasks pursued in learning centers can feed back into times spent in oral language activity. Youngsters who have written, illustrated, or read stories and poems can read their pieces during class sharing times. Youngsters who have prepared dramatizations or oral interpretations can present before their classmates or even youngsters from other classes in the school. In presenting, children will work to share written language productions with oral expressiveness, using voice and body to communicate more clearly the feelings they have written into their stories, poems, or original playlets. These oral sharing times will be the beginnings for further writing and reading activity.

The result is oral/written language cycles of experiences in which work with written language builds upon work with oral language and leads into further oral language activity. In this way written language skills are developed in conjunction with oral language skills, with neither skill area neglected.

Building Language Activity on a Literature Base

Even as oral language experiences are the keystone upon which to build other classroom activities, so literature forms a natural center from which a variety of oral and written language encounters can

branch Literature in which fine writers have handled words skillfully to tell stories and paint word pictures is a marvelous content for stimulating language production in both its oral and written forms. The great stories and poems of today and yesterday trigger ideas for talking and composing together — ideas that surface again in individual written composition. Stories, moreover, provide words as well as story and sentence patterns that children can begin to experiment with in speaking and writing; they are idea, story, sentence, and word banks from which youngsters can draw. And, of course, through pleasurable encounters with literature children learn the delight of written words.

Leaping from Literature into Speaking and Writing Teachers can design many different language experiences that begin with children listening to or reading literary selections and that encourage children to leap into active language production. Talking about stories, poems and plays, children can become involved in the interpretation of feelings and motives. Reading selections in chorus, they can use their voices to signal meanings communicated through words and punctuation. Improvising after listening, they can dramatize, pantomime, and retell parts of selections heard. Thinking out loud, they can plot story happenings onto a story chart and come to a better understanding of story development: how each event contributes to story structure, how repeated words and phrases build up interest and suspense, how simple an effective story ending generally is, how character development contributes to plot.

Writing About Writing activity flows naturally out of talk about literature. Through group oral composition based on shared stories, poems, and dramatizations, young people can begin to handle for themselves the ingredients of story, poem and playmaking. During an oral composition, youngsters may talk out a story guided by a creative teacher. Together they dream up a main character and endow him/her with qualities that will contribute to plot. They decide how their story will begin, develop, and end. They try out specific storylines to find phrases that tease the ear and tickle the imagination. Similarly, children can create poems and plays together to get a feel for the composing process, to see the pleasure inherent in creating with words, and to acquire some of the skills so important in 'writing about.'

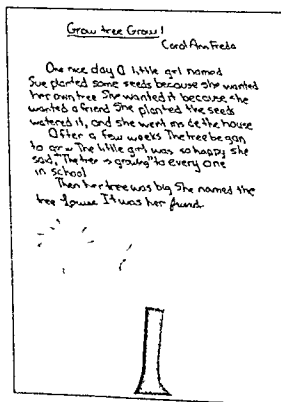
Individual writing flows too. Children who have composed together branch out to write in styles and forms related to a literary experience shared and enjoyed as a group. There are four general categories of writing activity into which children can leap.

1. **Structured writing** adheres closely to a model supplied by the teacher or a literary selection. Structured writing assignments include writing the script to a wordless book and using the pictures of the book as a story-writing guide, composing poems and adhering to a predetermined arrangement of syllables rhyming pattern, or word pattern, writing stories in sentences that pattern much like the sentences in a literary selection. The term *modeling* is sometimes used to refer to the process of structured writing since children are

composing within a predetermined form. It is popular today as teachers involve children in composing fables, myths, haikus, cinquains, limericks, and so forth.

- 2 **Focused writing** is based on given topics and language usage patterns. Focused writing assignments include writing on a predetermined topic or on one selected from many supplied. Topics may be titles, first lines, ending lines, as well as broad areas to be investigated through search in reference materials. Focused writing assignments are frequently geared to the development of particular skills and include writing that incorporates specific words, such as those heard in a story, specific sounds, such as a particular rhyming or alliteration, specific phrases, such as a recurring phrase that a poem or story will incorporate, specific kinds of words, such as powerful descriptors or action words.

FIGURE 1-2
Focused Writing



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- 3 **Open writing** allows the writer free reign as to topic, style, word usage. The writer composes whatever strikes his/her fancy at the moment, using whatever literary devices he/she desires. Previous experiences with literature and with the world are determinants, of course, of the direction the writing will take. Writing in a diary or journal in response to a real-life need or desire to express oneself is an example of open writing, which is self-styled, self-directed, and self-motivated.
- 4 **Re-writing** is a follow-up writing activity that occurs after an initial flow of ideas. Writers return to look over what they have written to

restructure sentences substitute more exciting words check spelling capitalization and punctuation eliminate wordiness The terms *editing* and *revising* are generally used to talk about these processes that are part of rewriting these terms imply that rewriting is much more than copying corrections made by a teacher it is a thinking process in which the writer often tightens both ideas and the structures that communicate them

Leaping Out of Literature—An Example Oral composition structured writing focused writing open writing and rewriting — all are integral components of elementary language arts programs In this section we shall see how one third grade teacher involved her students in the production of written language through a variety of writing experiences built on a literature base and flowing out of extended oral activity

A Shared Literary Experience A series of fablelike stories provided a literary beginning for Jacquelyn Shemanski's literature language cycle Androcles and the Lion The Lion and the Mouse and Belling the Cat Ms Shemanski chose these stories because each is developed through a clear sequence of events each teaches a strong value lesson each uses animals as important characters and each contains considerable dialog — storymaking aspects that Ms Shemanski wanted her third graders to experiment with in their own language production

Jacquelyn began the series by quietly sharing the pictures accompanying the tale of Androcles and the Lion As the third graders viewed the pictures they tried to hypothesize story development What is happening? Who are the characters? What kinds of qualities do they possess? Where is the story taking place? What is the message? Having interpreted the story through the pictures they listened as their teacher read the story to them carefully noting detail to determine if their interpretation was close to the original It was! Then as a class they retold the story as they had heard it and cooperatively wrote out summary sentences to form a story chart They called the chart A Good Turn Deserves a Return a theme they had perceived in their listening After this period of oral class activity the youngsters moved into group work Each three person group received a small story ingredient card on which their teacher had printed character time location and action words Each group went to a corner of the room orally to create together an original Good Turn story structured around the given ingredients In the groups the youngsters talked out their stories until they had a structure of which all three approved Later the class reconvened in a Storytelling Circle to share their oral productions with the class One youngster per group related the story beginning a second the middle and a third the end Since these youngsters had been working on story sharing for several months they drew upon their growing skill to use voice face and body expressively in storytelling

←
interpreting pictures as a
clue to story development

←
listening for detail and
developing a feel for story
sequence

←
putting together story
elements

Extending the Experience in Spots and Nooks Ms Shemanski had established a number of learning stations in the classroom. Several were temporary ones containing an activity that related directly to the shared Androcles experience and the skills the teacher wanted to stress in conjunction with that experience. One station for individual study was captioned 'Can You Solve This Story?' Here children interpreted four story pictures and wrote or audio-taped the story they thought the pictures were telling. A second station was captioned 'Look and Listen'. There students individually or in pairs listened to a series of sound filmstrips of stories similar in style to "Androcles". At a third station Ms Shemanski gathered sentence strips that she had made by cutting up the summary story chart that the children had cooperatively conceived. Students learning at the station had to reorder the strips and reset the punctuation and capitalization markers, which the teacher had previously cut apart from the sentences.

→
listening recording
reading writing and
listening

In addition, Jackie had established four permanent classroom study centers that would be available throughout the two week, literature language cycle: a recording/listening studio, a book nook, an ink spot, and an artist's corner. During the first week children visited the recording/listening studio to tape their group and individual oral compositions, the tapes becoming the content for further listening activity at the center. Children visited the book nook to read from collections of fablelike stories that also have a moral in the manner of 'Androcles'. They visited the artist's corner to interpret with pen and ink, brush and paint, crayon, or флопен the stories they were composing and reading. They visited the ink spot to record on paper either their cooperative oral storymaking endeavors or individual pieces with similar features. During this time, the walls of the ink spot were covered with pictures of animals that might well become the characters of fablelike stories the children would compose there, powerful words that could be employed to describe the animals were plastered higgledy piggledy on the tri boards that formed the backdrop for the ink spot.

→
writing to compare

Returning to Literature and Talk After several afternoons during which the third graders pursued the independent language activities either individually or in groups, Ms Shemanski brought her students together for another intensive period of oral interaction outflowing from an experience with a second related story. This time she shared "The Lion and the Mouse" as youngsters listened to identify features of the story similar to the features encountered in 'Androcles'. The youngsters compared the qualities of the lions in the two stories, the moral being taught in each, and the writing style. They talked about kindness and the conditions under which they themselves extend kindness to others. They thought too of how the stories differed. Talk merged into oral composition with the third graders mapping out an original tale about a different kind of lion and a different lesson to be taught. In Ms Shemanski's words: "The children set the scene and brainstormed the dialog and the actions. As they completed an oral version, they went back as a group to revise it and record it on sentence strips. Children took turns writing down a story sentence on a

long strip of oaktag, strips were laid out on the floor, and children decided where to add capitalization and punctuation markers. Then children took turns reading the story they had written down, using the punctuation marks as "voice signals" for effective story interpretation. A group volunteered to practice reading the story with expression and to take the story "on the road" — that is, to the primary grade classes in the building to share the story with the younger boys and girls. A second group volunteered to go later to the artist's corner to prepare pictures and puppets useful in sharing the story with the little ones.

← developing storymaking skills

← learning to use the voice to interpret word and punctuation meanings

A Little Drama The class oral interaction was followed by small group dramatic activity. Working this time from drama ingredient cards that suggested characters, feelings, and conflict situations, the third graders improvised dramatizations in which they resolved the conflict through a sequence of actions and some dialog. After only a short time spent in talking through possible lines and events, the five person teams presented a dramatized version of their stories. During the days to follow, team members went to the ink spot to write down on paper the playlet they had shared with classmates during drama time.

← learning to create drama on the spot

Another Story Adventure Shortly thereafter, Ms. Shemanski introduced her third graders to 'Belling the Cat'. This time she gave each child a copy of the story to follow along as she read. Students listened to the way she interpreted story meanings and punctuation signals through changes in vocal expression. In turn the children in four person groups read excerpts from the story, trying to interpret vocal signals — the punctuation marks — and word meanings expressively. Fellow students listened and helped readers refine their oral interpretation skills. Later individual students visited the recording/listening studio to record their complete renditions of 'Belling the Cat' and to listen critically to their own oral productions.

← acquiring ability to interpret word and punctuation meanings vocally

As a class, the children talked about the moral implicit in 'Belling the Cat'. One youngster noted that the cat was an appropriate character choice in illustrating the moral, and the class embarked on a discussion of the qualities people tend to associate with certain animals like rats, mice, snakes. Then they cooperatively plotted out original versions of 'Belling the Cat' in which they used different characters, a different sequence of happenings, and a different moral. This was an informal time that led students to relate similar personal incidents and to identify specific animals that might star as main characters in fables they would write on their own.

Individual Storymaking Leaping from oral encounters with literature and composition, the third graders at their desks wrote original fables that had animals as main characters, a moral to be communicated, and some dialog. Stories could be modeled after any of the fables encountered in the preparatory reading and listening activities. Each youngster converted his/her desk into a private writing office by propping up a three-sided box along the outer perimeter. The private office

← developing a story on paper

afforded the students the total immersion necessary to encourage the spin-off of ideas

When all the students had completed drafts, the teacher scheduled a writing workshop, a time during which students edit their stories in small groups aided by dictionaries, a thesaurus, and charts on written usage they have developed. Editors in teams note problems in each other's punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, identify spots where more powerful words are needed, and eliminate unnecessary words. During the workshop Ms. Shemanski confers with students, serving as general editor and solving problems that tax the skill of team members. Finally, young writers return to the privacy of their offices to prepare revised drafts. In the case of the stories written as part of the literature-language cycle founded on "Belling the Cat," "The Lion and the Mouse," and "Androcles," the youngsters' final drafts were bound in a class-designed cover constructed from bits of cloth and wallpaper. Later youngsters went individually to the artist's corner to illustrate the page or pages they had contributed.

One production from Ms. Shemanski's class book is shown below. You can see how the story is a creative spin-off from "Belling the Cat."

Trapping the Rat

Once there was a man who hated rats. When this man saw rats, he would always set traps for them. Fortunately the rats always got away.

Then the rats made a plan. One rat said, "Let's make a trap for the Man! And they did. The man got caught in the trap and never set traps for the rats again."

MORAL: Don't set traps for others or you might get caught in one yourself.

Alex

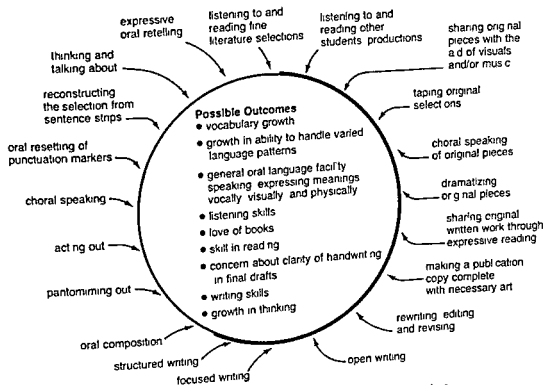
Pulling Together the Threads Ms. Shemanski jumped from individual writing into oral interpretation. Each youngster selected the means through which to share his/her story. The sharing time served as the culmination of this cycle of literature and language experiences. It completed the cycle by moving the third graders back into oral language activity.

Designing Literature-Language Cycles. Jackie Shemanski's literature language cycle is a format after which teachers can model similar experiences they are designing as part of the day-to-day activity of their elementary classrooms. There are four major components of a cycle:

1. *A literature component* Books read or heard provide the stimulation and the form for children's language outpouring, as well as ideas, vocabulary, and language patterns to incorporate in original productions.
2. *An oral language component* A combination of brainstorming, acting out, talking, composing activities serves as a bridge between literature reading and literature production.

- 3 *An individual writing component* Students who have acted out and talked out their ideas are generally eager to write down their cooperative productions and to experiment on their own with productions modeled after those discussed
- 4 *A sharing component* Oral sharing flows naturally out of individual writing activity, with children refining their sharing skills using stories and poems that take form beneath their own pens. These original productions are shared with classmates and children in other classes through a variety of techniques. Intergrade sharing has much to offer here

FIGURE 1.3 Model of a Literature Language Cycle



On the perimeter this model shows the kinds of activities that may contribute to the cycle and in the center possible outcomes. The darker position of the cycle shows kinds of activities using children's own composition work.

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Organizing for Instruction In building these components into a continual cycle of language experiences, teachers have available three major ways of organizing a class for instruction: full class instruction, small group instruction, and individual activity. Each makes a distinctive contribution to the total cycle.

Full class instruction in which almost all students interact serves as the unifying experience within a literature-language cycle. Activities carried out in the large group framework include listening to stories shared, talking out ideas encountered through listening and reading, composing and improvising together, refining basic skills.

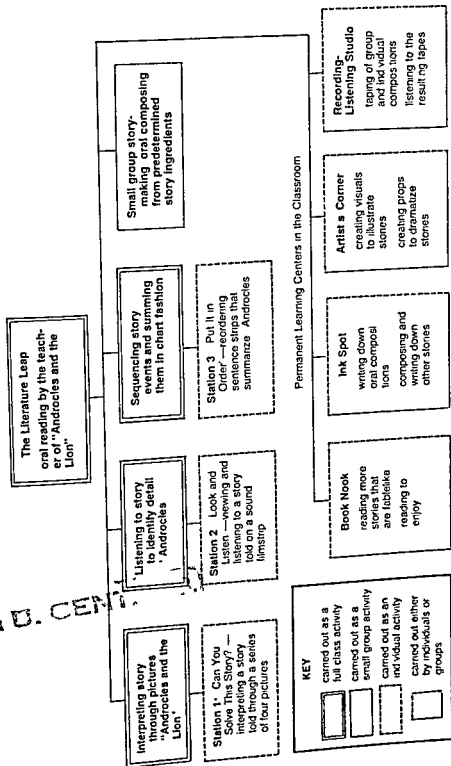
Small group instruction is derived from full class instruction. Youngsters in two- to six-person teams are involved in both oral and written composition tasks including rewriting; preparation of literary selections for telling, dramatizing, or taping; preparation of discussion sessions they will lead with the total class, illustrating verbal material, and so forth. Some learning stations are designed for group activity, for example, several youngsters may go to the recording station to tape a playlet, to an artist's corner to prepare visuals important in sharing, or to a listening cubicle to hear, view, and talk about a sound filmstrip.

Individual activity is an outgrowth of both full class and small group interaction. Working either at desk or learning station, the individual is occupied with thinking, writing down, reading, taping, viewing, listening to tapes, producing related art materials. Not all youngsters pursue identical tasks, so that through individual activity special interests can be explored and particular skills important to the individual can be developed.

Planning When designing original language-literature cycles, teachers find it necessary to plan in advance how small group interaction will flow out of periods of total class oral involvement and to plan personalized tasks to meet individual needs and interests. Even more important, they need to identify the kinds of skills and understandings children will acquire and the literary selections that form the base of the experiences. Teachers are finding that a flow chart is a practical format for planning learning cycles. It graphically depicts the relationships among activities and the way one activity builds on another. On the adjoining page appears a flow chart designed by Ms. Shemansky as she embarked on the first phase of the cycle with her third graders. It represents the experiences as they actually transpired, since the teacher had to redesign as she went along. Rarely in teaching can pre-charted plans be implemented exactly. Children contribute suggestions and react differently than anticipated. Unscheduled assemblies, classroom visitors, fire drills, changes in the schedule of special teachers interrupt ongoing classroom sequences. Audiovisual equipment does not arrive or malfunctions. Activities that appear ideal in pre-planning misfire in practice. Modifications are to be expected, given all the variables functioning in elementary classrooms.

Going Beyond Basals and Texts. In designing a literature language cycle, Ms. Shemansky designated an area of her room as a 'Book Nook', children enjoyed going to the Nook to read independently stories that were similar in structure to the fables they were encountering through listening. Additionally in the Nook were books galore to tease the senses and tantalize the imagination. Without a

FIGURE 1-4 First Stage of the Literature—Language Cycle



doubt, books and more books belong in elementary classrooms, not just basal readers and text books but the wealth of nonfiction, stories, poems, and dramas that is our literary heritage

Putting Texts and Basals in Their Place The fantastic number of books found upon library shelves leaves little reason to restrict reading to the graded reader, through which children in many classes acquire basic skills, and to the language arts text, through which some children encounter literature and language Basal readers and texts are simply one teaching tool far beyond which we must jump if we want youngsters to enjoy literature and language Those teachers who are required by school district mandates to work from a basal reading series must remember that the reading book can be adapted to stimulate language outpouring Students can compose together, talk together, listen, and write, breaking away from the story and poetry material they meet in the basal They can leap into other books, so that they quickly see that reading is not 'all work and no play' From the moment they begin to read, children should be given opportunity to crawl away into some quiet nook to enjoy a book adventure Young readers begin with books already enjoyed when shared orally by the teacher, some of the wordless picture books that contain such delight, or some of the very simple stories in which pictures dominate words

Language arts text series play a reinforcing role in the total language arts program They serve primarily to back up understandings gleaned through oral class encounters with languaging, youngsters who together have played with some component of language go to the text to read about concepts of language with which they have been actively involved In contrast, to use the text as the introduction to language or literature study can be disastrous Imagine the effect of an introduction like this Everyone turn to page 8 Sally, will you read the opening paragraph? Very good Mark, take the next paragraph Do you have any questions? Okay, complete the ten sentences beneath the two paragraphs The textbook used in this way is a dead end resulting in minimal language production

There are numbers of creative ways to use the language arts textbook One is as a source of word and sentence material If children are making sentence strips to cut up into sentence subject and predicate parts, to expand into longer sentences, to reorder, or to transform into related patterns, the book provides clear material A youngster in need of handwriting practice can copy sentences designated for classroom use Some of the newer series, in addition, offer poetry and story selections that children can prepare for choral speaking and individual oral interpretation Some also provide colorful maps showing the origins of the English language, language trees depicting language relationships, and selections from Old, Middle and Modern English These visuals, studied independently by young people, can be the base for classroom discussion of language change Some provide focused exercises and activities that can serve as content for personalized learning by those students who need more practice with concepts developed orally in group sessions Used in these ways language arts texts play a supporting role in language arts programs

Designing Language Explorations Into The Elementary Language Arts

In Eileen Morris's Yellow Ball Afternoon described earlier in the chapter, children were involved actively and orally in exploring their language together. The fourth graders were playing with the sounds and meanings of "Pease Porridge Hot," and with generating adjectives and adverbs. Our complex language system presents endless avenues for creative language explorations such as these, through which students gain heightened understanding of the way the English language works. As part of elementary language arts programs children can actively play with the way

- speech sounds are represented on paper,
- words are built from other words and from roots and affixes,
- words change with use,
- words are put together in sentence patterns,
- sentences are expanded and transformed,
- language sounds are used to delight the senses

All these aspects of language are open to oral exploration that has the potential to intrigue children, students can play with language during general languaging together times as part of larger cycles of language experience, and during class sessions specifically designed to focus on one aspect of language usage.

Evidence is emerging to support the contention that children can acquire writing skills through direct involvement with elements of language production. James Martin (Porter, 1972) reported considerable growth in the sentence writing skills of third, fourth, and fifth graders through a program that stressed understanding of sentence features reflected in children's own oral sentence making and that involved children in learning activities based upon inductive, open-ended investigations of aspects of English sentences. Children in the Martin study became aware of the pauses and changes in intonation that signal sentence endings and major sentence units. They related these features to written ones, specifically punctuation markers. The researcher found that children in the experimental groups showed significantly superior growth in sentence writing as compared to children in a traditional grammar program. Martin explained his findings: "Two aspects of oral language performance apparently contribute much to written communication: (1) an awareness of the relationship between intonation patterns of oral language and punctuation signals of the written facsimile and (2) 'sentence-sense' — the ability to differentiate between sentence units and non-sentence units."

Languaging Together. Writing in *Language Arts*, Jack Shore, a fourth grade teacher in the Shoreline School District, Seattle, Washington, described his use of oral language explorations with youngsters who earlier had expressed a total dislike for language activity and who were performing far below their capabilities (Shore, 1976). A major part of Shore's experimental program included practicing and charading basic sentence patterns, expanding and reducing them, playing orally with

word order in sentences, especially with prepositional phrases and adverbs that can be moved about in the sentence, inventing tongue-twisting sentences and alliterative telegrams, listening to speakers of different dialects

Children in Shore's class, for example, spent time in disassembling lengthy sentences to get at their core meaning. Presented orally with a jam-packed sentence such as, *On a cold afternoon in March, the strong, biting wind whipped through the swaying swirling branches of the towering oak trees growing on the far side of the open farm field*, students took turns deleting words and phrases until left with only two words, *wind whipped*, which can stand alone as an English sentence. On other occasions, stripped down sentences were reassembled by adding prepositional phrases, adjectives, and adverbs. Later youngsters wrote out jam-packed sentences for fellow students to disassemble orally in groups. Youngsters spent 40 minutes each day in this kind of active oral language exploration.

In addition, they spent 50 minutes in silent reading of books drawn from a classroom library collection, 45 minutes in listening followed by oral and/or written responses, and 35 minutes in word building, spelling, and handwriting activity. Between September and the end of February, Shore found that his intensive language involvement approach produced gains in every category measured on the Durrell Sullivan Achievement Test: word meaning, paragraph meaning, spelling, written recall, and produced a complete reversal of children's attitude toward language learning.

Shore's word building, spelling-handwriting period warrants particular attention. It was a time when youngsters were drenched with a variety of activities for making individuals love language: anagrams, hinky-pinkies, palindromes, spelling with a beat, expanding words, reducing words, coding words, spider-webbary, mnemonics and the outlaws, spellingarith, and rhyming dictionary.¹ These word plays have the potential to make language exploration meaning- and pleasure-filled. Consider just a few simple word plays that lend themselves easily to active oral involvement during languaging-together times.

- 1 *Beheadings*. A word like *blow* can be "beheaded" to become *low*, *lick* can become *lick*, *scan* can become *can*. Teams of children who have been introduced to the concept of beheading words can race in an allotted time to find more words to behead with the aid of a dictionary, if they wish. Joseph Shipley is the one responsible for calling this kind of word play a *beheading*. His book is a goldmine of plays with words.
- 2 *Fattening Ups*. Words can be fattened up by adding affixes. Supply a base word such as *sense*. Children in groups race to see how many different ways they can fatten it. Possibilities include *sensible*, *senseless*, *sensation*, *insensible*. Again, use of dictionary aids is acceptable. As follow up a youngster who needs handwriting practice writes out all the *sense* words on a large piece of construction paper. The child cuts apart the individual word pieces to form a jigsaw puzzle for fellow classmates to reconstruct as a learning station activity.

Shore's Word Play
Hartford 1972

- 3 **The -Tion Game** Can you give the *tion* that tells what we do when we find the sum? What detectives conduct? What we have when our stomach is upset? Children studying prefixes and suffixes can concoct their own affix riddles to share with classmates following the pattern of those above. Variations of the *-Tion Game* are the *-Less Game*, the *Dis Game*, the *Mim-* and *Maxi-* Games, the *Super-* Game, the *-Ance* Game, the possibilities are almost limitless.
- 4 **Echo Words** Some words contain the same sound repeated more than once, as a result, we have words like *flum flam*, *willy nilly*, *higgledy piggledy*, *tick-tock* that tickle both ear and tongue. Children can search for other echo words that repeat the same sound in this way. Words found can be shared and strung across the room on cards upon which they have been written in clear penmanship by a youngster needing practice.
- 5 **Logical Concoctions** Children can pantomime invented animals whose names they have concocted by abiding by English word forming rules and about which they have cooperatively and orally written descriptions using mind-stretching adjectives and adverbs. Concocted names and descriptions are placed in a hat to be drawn at random. Class pantomimists base their improvisations on the descriptions written on the cards.

Playing with Language. The word *play* is often used to describe the newer approach to children's language study. The activity has literally become a game with children performing gamelike operations: guessing, searching, figuring out, solving puzzles, pantomiming, leading, inventing, and, of course, thinking. The setting too is generally a group one in which language explorers are interacting orally with a resulting gain in listening and speaking skills.

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks teachers have is to sustain the gamelike quality of language study. Lack of success at this task is indicated by children's traditional lack of pleasure in language investigations. Most surely, however, this displeasure need not continue if teachers think of language study as an oral activity and search out creative approaches through which students can become actively involved in language play. Chapters 8 and 9 explore these approaches in depth.

repertoire to transmit messages to others. And throughout, youngsters will be actively involved in thinking — thinking about ideas they are receiving and producing. The result will be integrated language experiences in which reading, listening, speaking, writing, and thinking are part of a larger process. **COMMUNICATION IN ACTION**

As we have seen earlier in the chapter, one way of integrating language arts experiences is through oral language, a second is through literature-language cycles that involve children actively in all the language areas. But there are many other ways in which to achieve a blending that is meaningful — more meaningful than treating each of the arts as discrete entities to be taught through distinct lessons. These ways include integration through themes and topics having natural appeal for children of a particular age group. For example, upper graders can experience language in all its ramifications as they think, talk, and write about love, hate, sorrow, loneliness, fear. Topics from social and natural sciences can also provide the unifying thread for language experiences. Teachers in preschool and primary grades have successfully used topics such as circus, zoo, animals, plants, friends, transportation as a springboard into language activity. In upper grades teachers have built language activity around a country being studied, a socio-political happening, and an historical period. A class trip is an appropriate integrating topic at any grade level as youngsters plan for the excursion, enjoy it, and then talk and write about things seen, heard, and done.

Of course not all language activity will take place within integrated language experiences. In any program there is need for times in which children and teacher focus on a particular language learning. This is especially true in the area of handwriting, as children begin to develop skill in forming letters, and in the area of spelling, as children search for generalizations to explain the relationships among groups of words. But even in the case of handwriting and spelling, such focused activity quickly flows into more integrated experiences with language. Spelling words are displayed around the room where they stand ready for use in composition, children perfect their handwriting by preparing word and sentence cards as well as classroom charts.

In any case, the key characteristic of language learning is active involvement. A major responsibility in teaching is to design, organize, and facilitate activities that involve children fully in the communication process so that they respond to the world of events and language all around. Integrated language arts experiences can lead to this active involvement, especially when experiences begin with oral interaction and bring children into contact with books. To design integrated experiences, teachers must have a clear understanding of the goals to be achieved, of the book treasures that abound for children and of the power and the structure of the English language. In the next two chapters the language system and the books that make possible continued encouragement of active communication in elementary classrooms will be considered. In successive chapters, consideration will be given to objectives of language teaching related to listening, expressing, and understanding about language and to specific ways these objectives can be achieved.

Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- To design a literature language cycle that develops around three or four stories or poems requires ability to perceive relationships within literary selections. Find three stories that you feel could tie together a series of language experiences in the manner described in this chapter. Think about the selections so that you could clearly explain the basis for your choice, giving the specific relationships you see in the selections.
- If you are currently working as a teacher or teacher intern, try out a sequence of activities you design around the three or four stories or poems. You will probably find that you must revise your preliminary planning as you proceed.
- Locate three poetry selections you feel share a common element such that the three could serve as a unifying feature for a literature language experience. Again be ready to explain the relationship you perceive.
- You are a sixth grade teacher developing a series of language experiences around the theme 'loneliness'. Identify several activities with language that you could design within that theme, modeling some of those activities after ones described in the chapter.
- You are a first grade teacher developing a series of language experiences around the topic 'circus'. Again identify several language activities that you could design under the umbrella of the circus topic. Use the figure on page 31 as a guide to some of the activities you might design.
- Select a grade level of interest to you. Then locate in your college or school library three different language arts series. Decide which one(s) could most easily be adapted to support language together activities developing orally in a classroom.
- As a teacher of language arts, you will find the journal of the National Council of Teachers of English, *Language Arts*, an invaluable resource. Each issue focuses on two or three language-literature related concerns of the elementary school teacher.



Back issues you should particularly check include 49 no. 6 (October 1972), 52 no. 3 (March 1975) and 51 no. 8 (November/December 1974) each contains a series of articles on language acquisition and development.

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Part 2

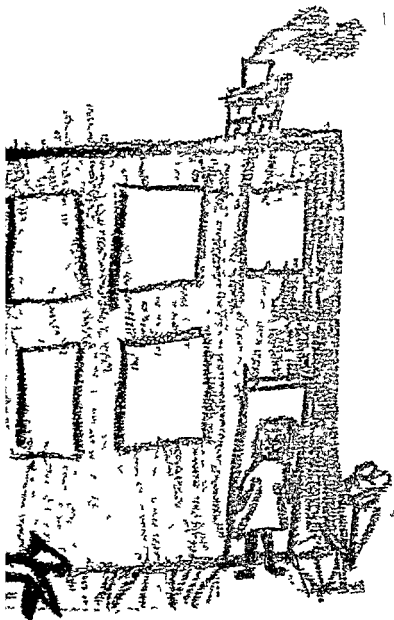
an introduction
to basic concepts
about language
and literature

Chapter 2

Language in the Language Arts —
Where Communication is in Action

Chapter 3

Literature in the Language Arts —
Where Childhood's Dreams Are Twined



Language in the language arts— where communication is in action

“Well, then,” the Cat went on, “you see

a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now I growl when I'm

pleased and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad.”

“I call it purring, not growling,” said Alice

“Call it what you like,” said the Cat

Through the Looking Glass

Gertrude Lapare displayed a large and colorful poster. “Think of a sentence that describes what the girls in this picture are doing,” she told the 34 third graders in her bilingual-bicultural class.

One student whose native language was English announced, *The girls are standing at the bus stop*. Ms. Lapare wrote the sentence on the board and went on to display two more pictures. For each a child whose first language was Spanish offered a descriptive English sentence patterning much like the one initially given. The teacher added these to the board: *The dog is sleeping on the sidewalk*, and *The boys are playing in the park*. After the three sentences had been written on the board, the children reviewed each by reading it orally several times to achieve the intonation pattern typically used to express a sentence like that in English.

“We’re going to do something different with our sentences today, boys and girls,” Ms. Lapare continued, “something with colored paper.” At this point she paused to distribute sheets of colored construction paper; each pupil received five different colored sheets and crayons: green, yellow, red, orange, and blue. Following a model that the teacher had prepared, the students stapled the five sheets into a vertical strip with the green sheet at the top and the blue at the bottom, as shown in the opposite diagram. On her model’s green sheet, Ms. Lapare printed the word *The* with green crayon. She left the yellow block blank. On the red she wrote *girls*; on the orange, *are standing*; and on the blue, *at the bus stop*. The students did the same.

When all the children had fastened their sheets and printed the words in the appropriate blocks, Ms. Lapare began again. “Now let’s see if we can fill in the yellow block with descriptive words that tell us more about the girls — that tell us what kind of girls they are.” The students volunteered words like *ugly*, *fat*, *bad*, *short*, *lazy*, *tired*, *excited*, *mean*, *silly*, and *funny*. As each word was announced, teacher and students wrote it on the yellow block stapled between the *The* block and the *girls* block. The youngsters called out words until their yellow blocks were jam-packed. If a youngster did not know the meaning of a word called by a classmate, he/she raised a hand. At that point, Ms.

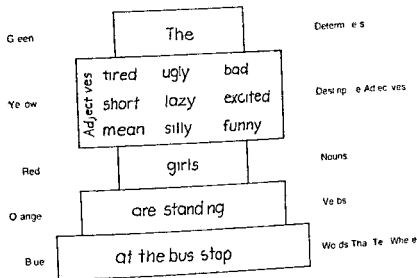


Using words to “tell
about,” hearing the sound
pattern of a sentence



Finding words that
describe

FIGURE 2.1 Sentence Building A Sentence Building that shows the favorite position of adjectives in English



Lapare, who knew only a limited amount of Spanish herself, asked one of the other Spanish-speaking youngsters in the class to provide orally the Spanish equivalent.

Then Gertrude Lapare explained: "What we have here, boys and girls, is a sentence building. In Spanish you can call it *la construcion de la oracion*. We're going to use it to build sentences. For example, from it I can build the sentence *The short girls are standing at the bus stop*. Will somebody try to build another sentence?" In the minutes that followed, the children called out sentences taken from their *construcion de la oracion*. They repeated sentences already read; that did not matter. For the native Spanish speakers, the purpose here was to begin to feel comfortable with the sound of the adjective in its normal English position, before the noun. In Spanish, descriptive adjectives usually follow the noun.

As an immediate follow-up, the youngsters divided into two person teams. They worked together, printing the words of the sentence *The dog is sleeping on the sidewalk* on the reverse side of the blocks of one student's sentence building and the sentence *The boys are playing in the park* on the reverse side of the blocks of the second student's building. Ms. Lapare cautioned the students to leave the yellow block blank as they first printed in the sentence. Then orally and together they filled in the yellow block with words that told about the dog or words that told about the boys. In pairing the students, Ms. Lapare had matched a native Spanish speaker with a native English speaker so that children could help one another.

While the pupils worked, Ms. Lapare circulated among them. On each of the yellow blocks that native English-speaking students had

← hearing the sound of the adjective-noun sequence

← writing adjectives



→
generalizing about the
position of adjectives in
sentences

stapled into their buildings, she printed the word *adjective*. Individually the youngsters explained to Ms Lapare the 'favorite' position of adjectives in sentences. The youngsters were already familiar with the terms *determiner* and *noun* so — from their sentence buildings — they could quickly generalize that a favorite adjective position in English is between a determiner and a noun. For the English speakers in the group, the purpose here was to gain a better understanding of the structure of their own language and to develop the vocabulary to describe that structure.

→
writing sentences with
adjectives

When all had completed the task and the teacher had spoken individually to the native English speakers, the students went on to share orally sentences read from their sentence buildings, attaching their own sentence buildings to the sides of their desks. During independent study times later in the day, the students wrote sentences on strips of paper, drawing the words from their sentence buildings. The English speakers color coded the adjectives yellow in the sentences they had generated.

On subsequent days children used their buildings as models for writing other sentences that followed the same sentence pattern. They constructed additional sentence buildings in which the block between the determiner and noun was filled to overflowing with descriptive adjectives.

As the weeks passed, children who had mastered the use of sentence buildings for supplying descriptive adjectives went on to construct other buildings that demonstrated different characteristics of English structure: agreement of nouns and verbs, verb tenses, and the pairing of singular and plural nouns with appropriate determiners as in *one child* and *several children*. In each instance, the color code remained the same with nouns written on red blocks, verbs on

orange, and so forth. In each instance, too, once children had filled in one block of their buildings with numbers of words — for example, many verbs in the verb block — they called out or wrote sentences, drawing words from their original sentence buildings. Soon, hanging from the light fixtures and covering the walls, buildings galore filled the classroom until it became a city of buildings from which children drew both words and sentences to include in their writing and speaking.

The Channels of Communication

The fact that the favorite position of adjectives is before the noun in English and after it in Spanish indicates that language is not immutable. Rather, the human mind has devised arbitrary language systems as vehicles for communication, as means of facilitating human interaction, and ultimately as vehicles for thinking. Words are actually symbols for things without meaning in and of themselves. People have attached meanings to the combinations of articulated sounds of which words are comprised and to the arrangement of these words in phrases and sentences. They have attached meanings to the intonations of voice — changes in pitch, stress, tone — and to the kinesic behaviors — the physical movements that accompany speech. Over the years, combinations of words, sentence patterns, vocal intonations, and kinesic behaviors have grown into languages through which people send messages to one another and interpret the messages of others.

Because language functions primarily as a vehicle for communication among people, to know a language is fundamentally to know how to use that system of sounds to send and receive messages. To teach language is to develop children's ability to communicate using all the channels through which people share their thoughts. A primary goal of elementary education, then, is that children know how to listen and speak, read and write, and use language to carry on basic thinking processes.

intrinsic rightness of one's own language code is relatively common, especially among monolingual people who take their own language so much for granted that they sometimes come to view other languages as inferior to their own. In this respect, the native English speakers in Ms. Lapare's class enjoy an advantage: they are not only learning something about the structure of their own language but — in contact with Spanish speakers — they are learning there is not just one right way of expressing human thoughts.

In the following section is an explanation of the communication channels people use to convey meaning: words, sentence structure, intonation pattern and kinesic behavior. These are the channels that children in elementary schools must learn to handle with ease if they are to operate maximally in a world where communication is central.

Words as Channels of Communication. Words are the bedrock of communication. Though arbitrary, mere symbols to which people assign meaning, words are really wonderful creations. They are the repositories of humankind's collective and individual experience. With words humans think with a degree of clarity and precision superior to organisms not blessed with the gift of verbal speech. The ability to use words to express thoughts has been called the single, most distinctive feature of *Homo sapiens*. It is this feature that has made possible the kind of civilization and control over the environment evidenced in the very short period during which speaking human beings have existed on the planet.

Kellogg and Kellogg's (1933) classic study of the child and infant chimpanzee reared in the same home for a year attests to the primary role of verbal language in human thinking. The Kelloggs found that the chimp kept up with the child in its intellectual development *until the child began to use words*. After that the chimp dropped behind, limited by its inability to communicate with words and use words for thinking. Donald Cohen (1976) of the Yale Child Study Center comments on the importance of verbal language to the developing child, pointing out that

With language comes sharpening of perceptual and intellectual discrimination as well as maturing of memory, humor, imagination, empathy, and dreams. The natural history of these developments can be described in terms of the toddler's special but almost universal gift: the emerging capacities for internal representation (codes, symbols, transformational rules) which radiate out from and underlie human language competencies [Cohen, 1976, p. 311].

Using words, people carry on higher level thinking tasks — describing firsthand experience, contrasting and comparing, generalizing, predicting, evaluating, synthesizing. One has only to recall talking out a complex problem to oneself to realize how fundamental words are in problem solving.

With verbal language perceived as a distinctly human quality, work with words becomes paramount in teaching and learning. This work

includes endless opportunity to listen and speak to read and write, to use words to think. It includes continuing experiences with the phonemes and morphemes the building blocks of words and study of the way people build words into sentence patterns.

English writing is essentially an alphabetic system in which the printed form attempts to represent the sounds of the language. Writing provides one or more graphic symbols, or *graphemes*, for each of the sounds that make up word symbols. Although there is no one-to-one correspondence between the word sounds spoken and their graphic symbols, there is a strong correspondence, enough to form a base for students learning to read and write.

Word Building Blocks Morphemes A *morpheme* is the smallest meaning-bearing unit of language, a meaningful sequence of phonemes that cannot be subdivided without destroying the meaning of the unit. Consider the word *boys*. Its meaning can be analyzed, *boy* means "young man" and cannot be subdivided without losing that meaning, *-s*, in this case, means "more than one." *Boy* and *-s* are morphemes, true building blocks, for words are constructed systematically with them. Some morphemes stand alone as words, *boy*, *cat*, *sing*, *two*, *give*, *of* are *free* morphemes. On the other hand, *bound* morphemes cannot function alone. English prefixes and suffixes like *-ness*, *-y*, *-s*, *dis-*, *pre-*, *mini-* are bound morphemes, as are certain word bases like *nate*, as in *nation*, borrowed from other languages, in this case Latin.

Children learn early how to handle the word-building techniques of English. Jean Berko (1958) studied the word-building skills of four to seven year olds to determine whether young children could generate the plural and possessive forms of nouns, the present tense, third person singular and past tense forms of verbs, and the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives. The researcher found that children of that age were already beginning to function according to the systematic word-building rules of English. Because the oral language of elementary students reflects with a high degree of consistency the systematic ways words are constructed in English, children's language samples can provide firsthand material through which they develop a heightened awareness and appreciation of how their language system operates. Children with mature understanding of the ways words are built from free and bound morphemes can unlock many new words by bringing their understanding to bear on words met in reading and listening. Understanding can be brought to bear in spelling and reading as will be pointed out in much greater detail in chapters 10 and 11. Furthermore, there is pleasure to be found in playing with the building blocks of words — a pleasure derived from working actively and orally at putting pieces of word puzzles together.

Word Order as a Channel of Communication To know a language is to know how to handle its *syntax*. Syntax refers to the arrangement of words into meaningful and grammatical sentences. Just as people send messages through word symbols comprised of phonemes, so people use the ordering or patterning of words as a means of communication. There is a

world of difference in the message sent by each sentence in the following pair, a difference achieved by changing the position of just two words

As dusk began to fall, John saw the tiger
As dusk began to fall, the tiger saw John

All languages share certain common syntactic features, even though they differ in vocabulary and rely on different means to achieve similar ends. These fundamental features are



Summarized after Samuel
Martin "Review of
Gerrit's Universals of
Language" Harvard
Review 34 (1964) 353-55

- Languages have rules for converting statements into questions, negatives, and imperatives
- Languages rely on noun and verb phrases as the basis for sentence construction
- Languages have words used to modify nouns and verbs
- Languages have in-built ways to transform one kind of phrase form into other phrase forms *the bird flew off into that the bird flew off, or into the bird that flew off*

In addition, languages have ways to combine equivalent grammatical units through some form of coordination *John saw me + Jack saw me = John and Jack saw me*



Based on Eric
Lenneberg's "The Natural
History of Language" in
The Genesis of Language:
A Psychological
Approach, ed. Frank Smith
and George Miller
(Cambridge Mass.: MIT
Press, 1966)

Transformational-generative grammarians emphasize similarities in syntax among the languages of the world, postulating that languages, though differing in surface characteristics, are similar in deep, or underlying structure. Ability to use and interpret this deep structure is what children learn as they acquire language facility. They learn to speak in the noun phrase/verb phrase pattern that typifies language, they learn to handle the 'rules' for question making, command making, negation, and modification by actually trying out language patterns. Language learning, in this respect, is neither a process of memorizing 'rules,' nor one of strict imitation; it is a creative process in which speakers begin to sense the underlying structure and to produce original utterances that adhere to the recurring patterns. Two year olds typically can form two or three word phrases with their 300-400 word vocabularies. By three to three and a half years, children are formulating grammatical sentences that adhere in most respects to the sentence making rules of their language; their vocabulary has grown to more than 1000 words.

It is in terms of conformity to the sentence-making rules of language that grammaticality is judged. Most speakers apply the essential rules in a relatively consistent way. Two researchers have studied how young children acquire ability to apply the rules for forming grammatical sentences, though they cannot verbalize what they are doing. Roger Brown and Ursula Bellugi (1966) discovered that imitation of parental statements plays an initial part; a very young child may repeat a sentence produced by a parent, in the process reducing it to the essential elements while at the same time retaining the original word order.

parental utterance
child's reduction

The dog was barking
Dog barking

At the same time, the child is producing original utterances that are reductions of typical English sentences. A parent "conversing" with a young child, according to Brown and Bellugi, tends to repeat and expand the child's utterance, adding auxiliaries, determiners, and prepositions to the basic words.

child's utterance
parental expansion

Mommy glasses
Yes, Mommy has her glasses

The parallel processes of child reduction and parental expansion probably account for children's early acquisition of the fundamental patterns of language and the eventual grammaticalness of their own creative utterances.

The universals of syntax that characterize all languages not only provide a basis for study of language acquisition, but also provide a framework for language study in schools. It seems logical that if schools are to introduce children to aspects of syntax, those aspects should be ones that generally affect meaning and that characterize languages in general: noun phrase/verb phrase constructions, the construction of questions, negatives, and imperatives, modification, transformations of phrases, coordination. These are the fundamental ways of constructing, expanding, and combining sentences — all processes that native speakers perform automatically as they orally build sentences. It is in order to understand the marvelous and systematic way that language operates that students in schools study the grammar of their language. In this context, grammatical labels introduced and learned should be those imperative for purposes of discussion of language universals. Although a teacher may find it helpful and interesting to know terms like *infinitive*, *subjunctive*, *modal*, to distinguish between *morphology* and *syntax*, or to distinguish among kinds of determiners, these learnings have little validity in elementary school language arts programs if the objective is general understanding and appreciation of language. Chapters 8 and 9 discuss completely the new approaches to the study of syntax, suggesting specific activities.

Vocal Intonation as a Channel of Communication. Intonation is an integral part of any language system. It is the rhythmic pattern, the melody of speech, it plays a significant role in the overall sound of English and other languages as they are spoken and read orally or ultimately written down and read silently. Features of intonation include

- 1 *stress*, or the loudness/softness level of the voice, the word *accent* sometimes is used synonymously with *stress*
- 2 *pitch*, or the highness/lowness level of the voice, scientists use the word *frequency* to refer to pitch level
- 3 *juncture*, or the pause that separates units of speech



See Chapter 9 for more
discussion of intonation
and other
features

garden primary instruction to acting and artistic interpretation of poetry. The applications extend to translating speech into written form and interpretation of the written word.

Stress Through changes in stress a speaker alters the meaning of his words. Take, for example, the parallel sentences

Have you ever seen a house fly?
Have you ever seen a housefly?

Orally, the difference in meaning is communicated through differences in stress. In the first, the speaker puts stress on *fly*, in the second, on *house*. By creating similar sets of sentences, children can begin to see how accent affects meaning. Word pairs to start the play are *match box* *matchbox*, *short cake* *shortcake*, *board walk* *boardwalk*. A related oral activity is to generate pairs of sentences based on phrases like *porch stoop*, *kitchen sink*, *short cut*, *diamond ring*, *wind chime*. In each case, students must use the phrase first with the typical stress pattern that shows the second word of the pair to be a noun, then they use it in a sentence changing the stress to produce humorous meanings based on the second word being a verb. Since many riddles and jokes are founded on this principle, the activity lends itself readily to joke making.

A difference in stress is also used to differentiate words that are otherwise almost indistinguishable because they contain the same sounds. The word *present* can be pronounced two ways depending on how it is functioning in a sentence. When used as a verb — *I will present him to you* — the accent is on the second syllable. When used as a noun — *I received a present* — the accent is on the first syllable. Again, children can identify words for which there are multiple pronunciations. The teacher can start the action by supplying words like *contest*, *review*, *record*, *contract*, orally playing form sentences in which each word is used in two different ways, ways reflected in pronunciation.

Stress communicates a sense of what is important. Read the following sentences several times, each time emphasizing a different word.

All hungry men must wait
Twenty ridiculous camels roared down the street
The ship leaves tomorrow
My Siamese cat is unhappy

Children can participate in the same activity, reading sentences and shifting meaning through varied stress patterns. Later they can read passages of prose and poetry, changing the stress patterns as they attempt numbers of oral interpretations of one selection.

Pitch Pitch refers to the highness or lowness of the voice or its rise and fall. Although in English there are four pitch levels — low, normal, high, extra high, in general conversation people tend to restrict themselves to low, normal, and high. Pitch changes can convert utterances

from declarative into interrogative and exclamatory sentences for there is a relationship between the vocal lift and fall and a speaker's intent to state, question, or exclaim. Try out a sentence for yourself, one like *The water is boiling*. By shifting the pitch pattern, you will be able to convert the statement into a question or an exclamation.

Being able to identify pitch patterns in speech helps the writer record ideas on paper. The writer who can recognize the sound of an exclamation needs little other assistance in punctuating it. The writer who recognizes differences in the sounds of declarative and interrogative sentences will be able to decide when to end a sentence with a period and when to end with a question mark. Incidentally, in helping children relate pitch patterns with punctuation in written language, one must beware of overgeneralizing. Although many questions end with an upward rise of the voice, questions beginning with words like *what where how why* — the question markers — generally end with a fall. This is a generalization that young language investigators can discover for themselves. Simply encourage children to generate many questions, which several scribes record on the board or on sentence cards to be displayed on an open area of classroom floor. Participants orally interpret the questions they have devised and study their productions to discover differences in the pitch patterns of their renditions.

Words, Sounds, and Thoughts (1977) describes a gamelike activity through which children work with the sounds of sentences. The teacher places four big labeling cards on the floor: Declarative, Imperative, Interrogative, Exclamatory, and then he/she divides the class into four teams. To play the class sentence game, a team member draws one from a deck of cards, each bearing a sentence devoid of end punctuation. The player reads aloud the card drawn, expressing meaning through pitch pattern, and then places the card beneath the appropriate labeling card. Successive players can either draw a new card to read and categorize or reread and recategorize a card already on the floor game board. If a player chooses to recategorize, he/she must show the change vocally.

Another activity valuable to help children vary and interpret pitch patterns is oral interpretation of literature selections. Children can read passages of prose and poetry into tape recorders and listen to their own renditions to see if they are expressing meaning clearly through their intonation. Children can also read aloud their own compositions to see if they have reflected pitch patterns in their punctuation patterns.

Juncture Juncture or pause refers to the ways in which speakers terminate their speech flow. Carl Lefevre (1970) describes four kinds of junctures and relates these to aspects of stress and pitch. In Lefevre's schema, *open junctures* are quick breaks in the speech flow usually made to distinguish between expressions like *a name* and *an aim*. Lefevre suggests that children play with similar sets of expressions to develop awareness of the importance of clear articulation in speaking.



Examples to include on
paying cards:
You are going to college.
The house is on fire. The
dam just broke. He came
too late. Let Jane do it.

He provides examples like *an ape/a nape, ice cream/l scream, an ice truck/a nice truck, flight rack/fly track, illegal/hill eagle* to share with students in order to start them looking for other sets in which juncture switches change meaning.

A second kind of juncture is *fade-level*. Fade-level junctures follow the commas in utterances like *Margaret, my friend, is at Thomas Jefferson School*. Pausing at the comma stops in a sentence of this type or ones containing parenthetical expressions or series constructions, the voice doesn't go up or down, it stays level. Fade-level junctures are represented by a comma in a compound sentence like *Our grass needs cutting, but our lawn mower is broken*, and by a semicolon in a sentence like *The star performer arrived, then the program began*. In some instances, however, no comma or semicolon is used to represent the pause. *The student who had perfect attendance received a plaque*.

Slightly longer junctures occur at the ends of sentences and generally are accompanied by upward or downward movements of the voice. *Fade-fall* juncture is typically used at the end of a statement as the flow of speech fades and falls off before the speaker begins another utterance. In contrast, *fade-rise* juncture typically is found at the ends of some questions as the flow of speech fades and the voice rises to the high level, as in

Do you want to teach in the elementary school?
Is Dr. Seuss the author of *The Cat in the Hat*?
Have you visited the children's section of your local library?

Clearly these junctures in speech bear a relationship to punctuation in written communication. A speaker without conscious thought or effort relies on fade-fall and fade-rise junctures to divide speech into oral sentence units so that meaning is sharpened for listeners. That upward fade-out at the ends of sentences communicates "I'm asking", only in sentences that begin with question-signaling words like *how*, *when*, and *why* is the upward rise unnecessary. In writing, terminal punctuation serves an identical purpose, but for the writer to punctuate successfully he/she must be able to distinguish the sounds of a sentence and translate those sounds into sentence signalers — commas, periods, question marks, exclamation marks. Robert Frost's definition of a sentence summarizes this relationship: "A sentence is a sound in itself on which other sounds called words may be strung. You may string words together without a sentence sound to string them on, just as you may tie clothes together by the sleeves and stretch them with out a clothes line between two trees, but — it is bad for the clothes."

Interpretive Intonation Most people are aware that the way they speak communicates how they feel — fearful, tired, bored, excited, happy. Linguists make a distinction between these emotional aspects of vocal expressiveness and grammatical aspects such as pitch, stress, and juncture, which are dictated by the structure of the language system. Emotions expressed vocally by speakers or oral readers are an "over story," placed on top of the sentence structure of the utterance, in no

way however does this fact downgrade the significance of tone of voice in the communication process

All manner of oral interpretation is relevant in helping children to perceive the import of tone in communicating and to use tone effectively in sending messages to others. Indeed many of the listening and sharing activities described later in this book are necessary precisely because they lead to heightened awareness of the impact of tone of voice and to increased skill in using tone as part of the message. The reader is referred to chapters 4 and 5 for specific detail.

Kinesic Behavior as a Channel of Communication To know a language is to know how to use and interpret the very pronounced gestures and the more subtle posturings and eye movements that accompany speech. Albert Scheflen (1972) notes the purposes served by body movements as an adjunct to verbal language. Some moves made by speakers frame and punctuate verbal interaction. A kinesic expression may say 'I am finishing my statement' or 'I am beginning a different idea.' Some movements instruct suggesting 'Sit there' or even 'I am in charge here.' Others warn of the consequences of a deviation from ordinary means of behaving: a kinesic move may say 'That's wrong' or 'Don't do that.' Be careful. In such instances body language is regulatory and may be used purposefully as a means of social control. Still other body movements communicate small bits of new information — 'Yes' or 'No.' Maybe. Some communicate feelings of fear, pleasure, excitement, liking or disliking toward the topic being addressed or even toward the listeners. Some like shaking hands, taking someone's arm in walking, opening a door are part of the rituals of society. According to Scheflen, the latter movements maintain the social order and make that order agreeable.

People use kinesic behaviors to communicate meanings without any accompanying speech. Listeners sometimes regulate who is next to speak; they do this by turning and focusing attention on the person chosen. Listeners indicate lack of understanding by a slight frown, agreement by nodding, interest by leaning forward intently. They indicate their own desire to speak verbally by a variety of gestures. Such cues make verbal pronouncements of who is to speak next unnecessary; these cues also tell a speaker how clearly he/she is getting the message across, whether he/she is talking too rapidly or perhaps whether he/she is boring a listener.

Sometimes kinesic behaviors are employed when the topic is too sensitive for expression through words. Messages such as 'I don't like you' or 'Would you please go away' or 'I don't have time now' are sent through silent language. Perhaps people have learned through experience that these messages are accepted with less animosity if they are expressed wordlessly.

As with verbal behavior, kinesic behavior does not have a single or universal meaning. To English speakers a smile generally is a sign of joy, excitement, friendship, but at times English speakers smile not because they are happy but because smiling is expected within a particular social context or to cover embarrassment. Moreover, people



Investigate Juus Fast
Body Language (New York: Evans, 1970)
Dorothy Hennings, *Smiles, Nods, and Pauses* (New York: Collier, 1974) and
Edward Hall, *Silent Language* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959)

from diverse cultural backgrounds do not draw upon an identical non verbal vocabulary. Persons from some cultural groups, for example, use touch much more often than do persons of other cultures to communicate. They may stand more closely together in communicating and in general may use more gestures. In this respect, silent languages are as numerous as the languages differentiated by the linguists.

Instructional Implications In this section we have considered four channels through which English speakers communicate with one another. From the ideas presented, four possible generalizations about the content and methodology of language instruction in schools emerge.





1. Communication should be at the heart of the language arts program and should be central in all of elementary education.
2. In a language arts program that has as its ultimate goal children's ability to communicate effectively, students should be actively involved in refining their ability to use and interpret words, sentence and intonation patterns, and kinesic behaviors. By learning to handle the intricacies of language, students will simultaneously gain in ability to think.
3. Since language is speech and writing is the representation of speech sounds through symbols based on sounds, students should have endless opportunities to participate in oral language activity and to work with the relationships between speech sounds and graphic symbols and between intonation patterns and punctuation signals.
4. Since verbal language is essentially an arbitrary system of symbols created by humankind, students should be involved in activities that develop appreciation and awareness of the fundamental characteristics of language. Children should be particularly active in word and sentence building experiences.

Activities that further children's appreciation of the symbolic and arbitrary nature of language can be fascinating. Here are a few ways to involve children intimately with this fundamental characteristic of language.

1. *Symbols Around Us* Children make a collection of the visual symbols that surround them — symbols such as those for peace, danger, and good luck; the astrological signs; the signs used to represent professional groups; the logos adopted by industries to represent their products. Young language investigators analyze the symbols to see if they perceive a relationship between the symbol and the meaning being communicated.
2. *My Sign* Young people who have studied visual symbols that are part of their culture enjoy creating original symbols for a commercial product of their own invention. Children enjoy creating their own family crests, a school logo, or a class symbol.
3. *Other Ways to Say It* Students in upper grades study other communication systems such as Morse code, braille, smoke signals, and sign language. They attempt to identify the meaning assigned to


units within these systems and analyze the relationship between sign and meaning. Children go on to invent original code systems to communicate meanings.

- 4 **Pictographs** Primitive peoples wrote down thoughts in picture form. They might have drawn a horse for instance to represent that animal. Students can try out a modification of picture writing by creating stories in which certain words easy to represent through

pictures recur — words like eye  nose  hand  mouth  In final drafts of their stories writers sub



stitute the pictures for these words



- 5 **Hieroglyphics** Upper graders can study samples of highly stylized


pictures as recorded by the ancient Egyptians. For example 

was the stylized picture or *hieroglyph* that represented water. In the case of a hieroglyph it is relatively difficult to determine from the picture what is being represented and so the picture is called an *ideograph* rather than a pictograph. Young people can invent original ideographs that they introduce into their own writing.

- 6 **Chinese Characters** Some Chinese characters though not all are compound ideographs, a combination of stylized pictures that taken as a whole communicate the desired meaning. For exam

ple  represents the sun while — represents horizon. The symbol for dawn combines the two other signs  while three

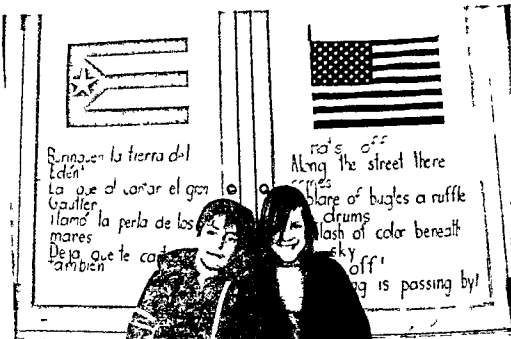
suns  represent the idea of clear or crystal. Moon is represented  while the notion of bright is communicated through

this symbol  Can you figure out why? There are many

books that provide information like this. The examples in the preceding paragraph came from Morris Swadesh's *The Origin and Diversification of Language* in which there is a page of Chinese characters clearly depicted. Using pen and ink, upper graders can try their hands at reproducing Chinese characters they find in books and encyclopedia articles about writing systems. Their sketches can perhaps explain how ideographs are combined to communicate complex meanings.

- 7 **Alphabet Soup** Some dictionaries and encyclopedias contain charts depicting the metamorphosis of the Roman and Cyrillic alphabets. Students can reproduce these charts for bulletin board mounting. In so doing they may begin to see that written symbols are creations of the human mind and that these symbols have changed over the centuries. They may also perceive the difference between alphabetic systems in which sound and symbol are related and picture based systems in which meaning and symbol are related.

See Morris Swadesh, *The Origin and Diversification of Language* (Chicago: Aldine, 1971).



Communication as a Social Phenomenon

The word *communication* is a modification of the Latin word *communicatus*, "to share." The word *sharing* suggests that communication is essentially a social process that has as its ultimate purpose a common understanding, a unity of thought within the social group.

The social function of language determines its nature. To serve as a vehicle for communication, language must have a common meaning based on people's experiences. There must be some agreement within the social group as to the general meanings assigned specific words, sentence orderings, intonations, and kinesic behaviors. On the other hand, because individuals within the group bring unique perceptions to the interpretation of language symbols, differences in interpretation exist as well. No two people have had identical experiences with their world, and so their perceptions of language meanings may be distinctive.

Differences in Language Meaning The fact that language meanings are constantly changing accounts to some extent for differences in interpretation. Robert Hall (1960) explains continued language change in terms of the immense range covered by situations with respect to which a given word is used. He describes, for instance, the enormous variability in the things named *pie*, a word which can refer to a two crust, deep-dish, pizza, or Eskimo variety. For that reason, the sentence, *Do you want some pie?* must be interpreted in terms of the wider context in which it is spoken.

The emotional feeling attached to words accounts too for different persons' interpretation of them. For individuals or small groups within a larger social group, a word may carry a positive or negative meaning. For example, the words *snake*, *communism* or even *picnic*

Words having considerable variety in meaning to play with fly port d'sh glass cake drink boat

may carry negative associations while *roses* *birthday* or *Thanksgiving* may carry positive ones

Among the words that carry a negative connotation for many persons within a social group are those used to refer to bodily processes and to unpleasant phenomena. Perhaps this accounts for the tendency to create more acceptable words or *euphemisms* for ones with respect to which a negative connotation has evolved. *Mortician* for example has become the politer term for *undertaker*, *sanitary engineer* for *garbage collector* and *domestic engineer* for *housewife*.

Similar feelings exist about the desirability of some other forms of expression. One like *I ain't got none* communicates clearly yet for a good number of people the usage carries a negative connotation. The same is true of expressions like *I done it* and *Me and him is going*, of nonconforming spellings like *recieve* for *receive* and of the pronunciation *pitcher* for *picture*. Expressions and pronunciations socially unacceptable to numbers of people have been termed *nonstandard*. *Standard* on the other hand refers to forms that are socially acceptable. Some readers and teachers may be inclined to apply the labels *incorrect* or *bad* rather than *nonstandard* to forms that are not fully acceptable. Modern day linguists however reject this terminology pointing out that there is nothing inherently wrong with the forms. Actually some communicate as clearly if not more clearly than do standard ones. It is simply a matter of social acceptability.

Linguists talk too of the functional levels of language. Robert Hall (1960) explains that some forms of words and expressions are more often used in conversation than in written communications for example contractions. Writers tend to be a bit more formal in their choice of words than are speakers perhaps because the former have an opportunity to rework their words and to structure sentences more carefully. In addition most people vary their manner of speaking depending on their location and listeners. For example functioning with family members at home people speak differently than when talking to acquaintances outside church or synagogue after services writing and speaking in more formal situations as in addressing a large audience they rely on longer words and more complex language patterns. They do this because numerous contacts with people and books have taught that different situations demand different varieties of expression. This applies equally to pronunciation and even spelling. In more formal situations a speaker takes greater care to articulate clearly in really important written communications a writer double checks spelling of difficult words to assure conformity whereas in writing personal notes a writer is less careful. Speakers and writers make distinctions like these because they have learned that some situations warrant certain ways of expression and that they may be judged on whether their language production abides by the conventions mandated by the situation.

Differences in Dialect Most languages are comprised of numbers of variant forms or dialects. This we would expect since language is always changing and words and expressions mean different things to

different people. Dialects differ in three major respects: vocabulary, structure, and pronunciation.

Regional Dialects One kind of dialect has regional origins, for example, British English and American English are dialectal varieties. In British English *dray* means 'nest', *lift*, 'elevator', *perambulator*, "baby carriage", *call box*, telephone booth. The extent of these vocabulary differences is indicated by the fact that entire dictionaries have been developed that catalog word and meaning distinctions within the two dialects. British and American English differ as well in elements of structure. Britishers say, "He was taken to hospital." In standard American English, the expression would be, "He was taken to the hospital." And then there are pronunciation differences so evident that they need not be described.

So far discussion has centered on regional dialectal differences found in separate and large geographical areas. Britain and the United States. Dialectal variations exist as well within the United States. Contrast the variety of spoken English in New England, the Midwest, the Southeast, and the West Coast. Words like *grease*, *root*, *car*, *creek*, *metal* may have decidedly different pronunciations. *Tonic* and *soda*, *hoggie* and *submarine* may not convey the same meaning. Syntactic differences exist, too. In the Southeast a typical question-making structure is "Y'all comin' to dinnuh?" with the question shown through vocal intonation. In other parts of the country the more likely structure may be "Are you coming to dinner?" The appropriate form is, rather clearly, a matter of geographic location.

Linguists hasten to remind us that no language or dialect is inherently superior or inferior, that none is deficient. Languages and dialectal variations of languages are simply different because they have grown up and changed in response to the needs of the people using them and the language development influences affecting them. Again in discussing dialects, the words *right* and *wrong*, *correct* and *incorrect* are inappropriate. The appropriate question is whether the variety of language being employed in a situation is communicating clearly and acceptably to members of the listening group.

Social Group Dialects. The same is true of dialects based on social groups. In the United States some groups have developed dialects identifiable in terms of vocabulary, syntactic structure, and pronunciation. These dialects include black, Cajun, Appalachian, and Hawaiian English. According to Joan Baratz (1969) these dialects are "well ordered, highly structured, highly developed language systems" with extensive vocabularies and consistent rules for sentence making. Speakers of nonstandard dialects apply sentence-making rules just as automatically and consistently as do speakers of other dialects. Of course, children who come to school having assimilated the vocabulary and syntax of their own dialect will probably test lower in verbal ability, for their ability is being measured in a dialect other than their own.

In many classrooms there are children who speak a nonstandard dialect. How do you deal with dialectally different children in a

classroom where there is more than one dialect present? Logically there are three possible approaches to eradicate, to keep, and to add

The *eradication approach* attempts to stamp out the nonstandard dialect and replace it with the one standard for the region. As they speak students are "corrected" to bring their language in line with the standard. The problems inherent in this approach are numerous. Children corrected at every turn, made to feel there is something wrong or even inferior with their speech, have in the past stopped orally sharing in schools. They have become essentially nonverbal in class discussion something that is counter-productive to continued language development. Then too, language is a social phenomenon a part of culture, in requiring a complete dialect change schools destroy part of children's culture.

The *keep approach* takes an opposite tack. According to this view since every dialect has equal communication potential and is part of culture, children should not be asked to speak or write any dialect other than the one they have acquired within their social group or region. The dialect children bring to school should be accepted as a structurally consistent means of communication fully capable of carrying messages to others. This dialect should be used as the medium of instruction, say advocates of the keep approach, children should be encouraged to express themselves in their own dialect and ultimately to perceive its structure rather than that of the standard one.

Again, there are numerous problems inherent in the approach. First, few books have been written in nonstandard syntax and vocabulary, speakers who wish to read extensively must know how to interpret the syntax and vocabulary of the standard form. Then too nonstandard dialects are not typically used in a vast range of business and social situations. Nonstandard speakers are less likely to find high paying managerial and professional employment in the United States the way one speaks to some extent determines the economic level one can achieve.

The *add approach* is a middle of the road position. Advocates urge the full acceptance of the language variety children bring to school. Children should be encouraged to communicate in that dialect sharing ideas, enjoying verbal interaction with others and gaining skill in oral communication. Advocates however suggest that it would be unfair not to introduce the standard dialect to children who speak a nonprestigious dialect, since this might limit opportunity for economic achievement. For that reason teachers are further urged to provide opportunities for children to learn standard English as a second dialect so that they can learn to handle situations that call for the standard. Meanwhile they may continue to speak their own dialect at home and in social situations that call for the first dialect.

In effect, the add approach helps the child become bidialectal just as with the other methods however, there are problems with the bidialectal view. First one group of children is forced to conquer a double language learning task, something not required of other learners. Second this learning task is more difficult than it sounds. Baratz (1969) found through research investigation that when speakers

Read When Child on
Speak a Dialect
in tractor 81 (March
1972) 60-61 see also
Robbins Burling Eng in
in Black and White (1st ed
York Holt Rinehart &
Winston 1972)

of a dialect learned in infancy attempt to acquire a second dialect, interference from the first dialect occurs

Although the discussion of problems inherent in all three positions suggests that no one solution is totally acceptable, the most popular position today is the bidialectal approach. A few definitive conclusions emerge, however. Anyone who teaches or is preparing to teach should be familiar with the nature of dialectal differences and understand that no dialect is better than others. Teachers especially should be aware of any tendency they may have to judge forms of speech and to react to the form, rather than to the substance, of messages children are sharing. If an approach cuts down on children's willingness to speak in classrooms and on their enjoyment of oral interaction, something is wrong with that approach. Also, all teachers need to take care not to interrupt children to correct sentence or word structure. This is as true of teachers working with children who are refining their skill in speaking their native dialect as it is of teachers helping children acquire a second dialect. Constant interruption and correction can easily turn a pleasurable sharing-together time into a period of discomfort that children will soon learn to dread rather than anticipate. Communication, after all, means sharing and successful sharing of meanings should be the first goal of classroom oral interaction.

Another goal is that all youngsters comprehend the nature of dialectal differences and language change so that they overcome the misconception that one dialect is inherently superior to any other.

The social ramifications of language make exciting content for classroom study. Young people can conduct first hand studies to determine 1. vocabulary distinctions among members of their own generation, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, 2. the positive and negative reactions of people to particular word and usage patterns, 3. the way people change their own language depending on the social situation. Youngsters in bidialectal classrooms can look upon their own language patterns as firsthand data from which they can build dialect comparison charts and dictionaries that include examples of vocabulary as well as syntactic differences. Students can listen to a variety of dialects on tape or disc and try out some of these varieties as they dramatize situations in which particular dialects — either regional or social — would be appropriate. They can write stories in which they change their form of expression depending on the situation. The result is young people who are language wise, who not only use their language effectively but understand some of the characteristics that make language what it is.

The Bilingual Child Many classrooms contain children whose first language is not English. Students whose native, or first language is Spanish, Portuguese, German, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese sit next to native-English speakers and are instructed by monolingual teachers. In this situation, what is an English speaking teacher to do?

Catheryn Eisenhardt (1972) describes three facets of the language arts teacher's role. First, the teacher serves as speech model for youngsters who are becoming bilingual. Often these youngsters are conversing in home and community in their first language, their inability to

communicate easily in English cuts them off from neighborhood English-speaking children. Their major contact with English is at school, and their beginning attempts at English will follow the pronunciation, intonation patterns, and sentence patterns heard at school.

Second, the teacher must be aware that the child's first language differs from English not only in vocabulary but in the phonemes and morphemes of which words are comprised, in basic sentence patterns, in intonation patterns, and even in kinesic behavior — in short, all aspects of the channels of communication discussed earlier in the chapter. As Eisenhardt points out, Spanish speaking children who have already learned their alphabet will pronounce the vowels as (ah) (ey) (ee) (ō) (ōō), not as (ā) (ē) (ī) (ō) (ū), so they will have difficulty distinguishing among words like *cut*, *cat*, and *cot*. They are used to pronouncing all vowels, so that on their lips a word like *boat* can easily become a two rather than a one syllable word. There are structural differences too. As noted earlier, the descriptive adjective usually follows the noun in Spanish. Other basic structural differences include: 1. no use of *s* on the third person singular verb, 2. no use of the auxiliaries *do*, *does*, *did*, and *will*, 3. substitution of the verb *to be* for the verb *to have*. In addition, the Spanish speaker of English may carry over the typical stress pattern of Spanish, overaccenting English determiners, prepositions, conjunctions, and auxiliaries. Spanish speakers may have difficulty adjusting to some of the conventions of written English. The manner of indicating questions and exclamations differs in the two languages, the manner of indicating direct quotations differs as well.

first language. In this way native English speakers gain by the presence of diverse languages and cultures in their classroom, and newcomers feel that the language and culture they bring are valuable contributions.

Language Teaching — A Summary Thought or Two

Language is primarily an oral system devised by the human mind as a vehicle for communication. Because it is spoken, oral activity must occupy a considerable portion of elementary students' time in schools, through oral activity children learn to handle words, sentence patterns, intonation patterns, and kinesic behaviors. Through oral activity youngsters come to know about their language, they learn how to describe and talk about it. This is true of monolingual speakers as well as of those developing skill as bilingual and bidialectal speakers.

Language also is a social phenomenon. Associated with language are feelings about what is appropriate language to be used in different situations and feelings about the goodness of the way one speaks. Teachers of children who come to school speaking a variety of dialects and languages must be aware of the students' feelings about language and understand that no language or dialect is inherently superior as a vehicle for expressing thought.

Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Think about and construct a list of expressions and words that bear a very negative connotation for you. Consider why these forms affect you so strongly.
- Observe yourself as you function in teaching or social situations. Do you have a tendency to want to correct usage patterns you find objectionable?
- Take time during a period of social interaction to observe how different people use kinesic behavior and intonation to communicate. What variations do you perceive in individual usage? Do you find people who need help in expressing themselves more effectively through these communication channels?
- Video or audio tape segments of your own language production in a real classroom situation, if possible. Study the tape to see how well you are using kinesic behavior and intonation as part of your communication and to determine how clearly you are using words and sentence patterns to express the meanings you had in mind.
- As you speak, study the kinesic behaviors of your listeners. Think about what kinds of messages your listeners are sending you without using their vocal folds and tongues. By doing this you may discover that the word *language*, which is derived from the Latin *lingua*, meaning 'tongue,' does not encompass the full range of communication channels.
- Identify a list of euphemisms currently in vogue. Devise a classroom learning experience in which children in upper grades could become actively involved in discovering the function of euphemisms in language.

- Identify a list of specific words used in your geographic region that are applied differently in other regions of the country. Devise a learning activity through which children in upper grades discover that words do not have identical meanings in all parts of the country. Think about how you could correlate dialectal study with map skill tasks.
- Develop an activity that could help children discover the basic generalization that language is in a continual process of change.

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Literature in the language arts— where childhood's dreams are twined

A ch d ch story land
 And with a gentle hand
 Lay it where Ch dhood's dreams are twined
 In l'tary's mystic band
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Amy, a four year old with already a year of nursery school to her credit, sorted through a large stack of picture storybooks to find one to hear. From the stack she quickly drew Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. "Why did you pick that one?" a teacher-friend asked Amy.

Amy was as fast in answering as she had been in selecting. "I like it. We read it in nursery school." And though Amy already knew the story of how the very hungry caterpillar ate its way through oranges, strawberries, and even cupcakes finally to emerge a beautiful butterfly, she settled down to enjoy the story and pictures again. She enjoyed too a follow-up experience. Her teacher-friend cut a hole in a large piece of construction paper, a hole like those in each of the pictures depicting part of the caterpillar's feast. Amy selected red to color around the hole to show something that the caterpillar either ate or might eat its way through. She turned the paper over to color purple around the opposite side of the hole. She explained "This is an apple he ate" and "This is a plum he ate" as she told about her illustrations. The teacher penciled Amy's statements next to the drawings and read them aloud to Amy, who read them back. Quite clearly for Amy, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* proved a delight and response-filled excursion into storyland; quite clearly, too, the book had the potential to turn Amy toward production and interpretation of language.

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 er storybooks

How Children Respond to Literature

Alan Purves, writing in *Elementary English* (1975) has identified three variables that determine how a child like Amy will respond to story, poem, or nonfiction. First are the characteristics of the reader: his/her "attitudes, experiences, perceptual abilities, emotional and psychological state." Second are the characteristics of the literary selection. Third are qualities inherent in the reading situation — "whether assigned or not, whether in a classroom or not, whence stimulated, and for what purpose undertaken." In this section, let us look at some of the more significant characteristics of the child-reader that affect literary response, reserving consideration of the other two variables for later in the chapter.

Knowing about Piaget's stages of cognitive development, one would expect third graders to respond to literary works in terms of the concrete and in terms of themselves; one would further anticipate evaluations that include few reasons. In contrast, the sixth grader who is beginning to work in terms of formal operations will be able to provide more extensive reasons and make the leap into interpretation of story happenings and character traits.

The Child-Reader Makes Value Judgments. Myra Weiger (1976) provides additional data on the value judgments elementary school children make in response to literary selections. Weiger finds that second graders can recognize and understand misdemeanors (bad or naughty acts) in stories like Evaline Ness' *Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine*, Russell Hoban and Lillian Hoban's *The Sorely Trying Day*, and Tomi Ungerer's *No Kiss for Mother*. On the other hand, second graders have some trouble perceiving the motivating factors behind the naughtiness — in other words, ferreting out the reasons for the misdemeanor. Likewise, second graders have considerable trouble understanding and sometimes identifying the punishment administered to misbehaving story characters. Fourth graders too can recognize misdemeanors in stories written for them: stories such as Carol Brink's *Caddie Woodlawn*, Eleanor Estes' *The Hundred Dresses*, and *No Kiss for Mother*. They are better able to recognize motivational factors behind a naughty act than are second graders, but they still have considerable trouble perceiving the punishments administered in a story. Sixth graders can handle misdemeanors and motiva-

Sharing books and
making friends



tions in literary works for some however recognizing punishment appears difficult

Piaget (1932 1969) also supplies a framework for analyzing the development of moral judgment in children. He describes three stages in this development

STAGE I
up to ages 7/8

justice is interpreted in terms of adult authority. What is good is that which conforms to adult rules of right. What is bad is that which conflicts with adult rules.

STAGE II
between ages 8 and 11

justice is interpreted in terms of the old adage: a tooth for a tooth. This is equalitarian justice.

STAGE III
ages 11/12 and up

justice is interpreted in terms of equity. The child judges particular actions by considering motivations and extenuating circumstances.

According to Weiger (1976) children looking at naughty acts in stories tend to judge the acts much as would be predicted based on Piaget's framework of stages. Second graders about seven years of age judge the acts of naughty story characters in terms of clear cut categories of right and wrong set down by adult authorities. Justice is what is administered by authority figures as shown by comments such as: 'My mother don't like us to tell lies. She'd keep us in the house. That's what my father does to me' and 'I don't like fighting cause I know it makes God mad'. Weiger finds that many fourth graders still respond to naughty acts in stories by referring to adult authority but some begin to function in terms of equalitarian justice and a more analytical consideration of motivation and circumstances. A more mature perception is shown in a comment like this one: 'They kept bothering her and she couldn't take it no more so she just moved away and they learned a lesson'.

By sixth grade many students exhibit responses to naughty acts that exemplify characteristics of Piaget's STAGES II and III. In judging Pinocchio's act a typical sixth grade response is: 'Since he was just a puppet he wouldn't know better' — a response that shows some consideration of extenuating circumstances. Based on findings such as those just cited, Weiger proposes that children in schools need much more opportunity to react to moral dilemmas as a means of developing a mature sense of human justice. She concludes that children's literature provides an effective method of developing moral judgment in children because it deals with moral experience at every age. (1976)

Story Qualities That Trigger a Response in Children

Selecting books with literary qualities that will trigger a response in children is a key part of language arts teaching especially if schools consider



Books that can serve as organizing centers for values education discuss ones

Charles Fingert's *Tales from Slave Lands* especially *The Tale of the Lazy People* (Doubleday 1924)

She Siversen's *The Giving Tree* (Harper & Row 1964)

Marc Brown's *Once a Mouse* (Scribner's 1961)

Geoffrey McDermott's *The Magician* (Holt Rinehart & Winston 1973)

Algon Black's *The Woman of the Wood* (Holt 1973)

Harve and Margo Zemach's *Duffy and the Devil* (Farrar Straus and Groux 1973)

Guiding a child to
a book he will
enjoy



building children's love of books and reading a primary goal of language arts instruction and if schools intend to use books as springboards into language experience. Teachers are faced with an abundance of stories from which to choose those to share with children, an abundance so vast and varied that an understanding of what makes a book fine is essential in making wise choices. Charlotte Huck (1976) defines literature as "the imaginative shaping of life and thought into the forms and structures of language," and defines the province of literature as "the human condition; life with all its feelings, thoughts, and insights." To this aesthetic ordering of life's experiences found in great stories, the reader responds and is transported beyond immediate perceptions of the world to feel deeply — to care, to want, to cry, to laugh, to love, to hate, and perhaps to "know" for the first time. Some writers can weave so complete a spell with words that the story becomes reality and the real world ceases for a moment to exist for the reader.

A reader's response to a story is an outgrowth of previous experiences with life and literature, yet the skill with which the author has spun the story is an equally significant determinant of the response engendered in the reader. To catch up the child-reader in the web of story, the author must create believable characters, interweave elements of plot, develop a theme that pulls story threads together, and make words flow with beauty and agility across a page. In books for the younger child, the illustrator must contribute pictures that tell the story as forcefully as the words and that stimulate equally strong responses. Character, plot,

theme words illustrations — these are major story ingredients to consider in bringing children into contact with books

Character Some characters remain in mind for many days after a reader has encountered them in stories. Readers remember Mary Poppins because through the book that fantastic lady became real to them. Mary Poppins is a full-blown character. Even in a first meeting, readers see her as an assured, slightly arrogant person who knows what she wants and will surely get it. Quickly too they see her as a magical lady who can ride up as well as down bannisters and take the reader along with her to parties up in the air. They see her as a proud creature who admires herself in store windows and as a bossy one who is ready to tell others what to do. But throughout they know she cares about Michael and Jane. By the time Pamela Travers has taken them not more than part way into the story, those children and adults who have taken numbers of previous excursions into fantasyland through books or even through Disneyworld are beguiled by Mary, and by the last chapter of the book when she departs on the west wind they wish with Michael and Jane that she would come back.

The Multi-Dimensionality of Story Characters The magic of *Mary Poppins* lies in its characterization. This lady of fantasyland has many dimensions in her personality. Some of these are qualities that everyone possesses for who has not stopped before a mirror to take pleasure in one's appearance? But in addition, Mary goes beyond the ordinary: she is painted bigger than life in a kaleidoscope of color that causes the child reader to turn to the next page to see what she will be doing next. Yet to a certain extent the child already knows what the star will be doing for *Mary Poppins* like most characters in books performs with a certain consistency. She rarely steps out of character to become something other than her customary autocratic, proud, magical, caring self. It is because Mary is multi-dimensional, human but larger than life, consistent in her actions, and in the end very likable that she stays in the reader's mind long after the book has been finished. *Mary Poppins* has become a friend the reader remembers.

Characterization is an especially basic ingredient in books enjoyed by children starting about second or third grade. Joey is the whole story in Lee Kingman's *The Year of the Raccoon*. Fifteen-year-old Joey knows that everyone in his family is somebody special except himself; he is only average. It is Joey who hurts inside and in the end loses what is dearest to him, the furry raccoon that has filled his life for one long year. And it is normal human Joey with all the growing-up feelings of rejection, loneliness, and inferiority who makes the reader read on. Most good books that attract maturing youngsters have at least one focal character like Joey. Claudia is that character in E. L. Konigsburg's *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*; shrewd and worldly-wise Claudia with all her idiosyncracies about insects, cleanliness, and human comforts. In Robert McCloskey's *Homer Price* the focal character is Homer himself, an irrepressible young man with a sense of humor who has a knack for getting into and out of troublesome situations.



Pamela Travers's *Mary Poppins* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1934)

How Character Is Developed It is interesting to look at the ways a skilled author puts flesh and bones in a character and then fills him/her out with human feelings. One way an author reveals the person is through descriptions that paint the story character in the reader's mind. In E. L. Konigsburg's *Jennifer, Hecate, Macbeth, William McKinley, and Me*, Elizabeth, the reader, for example, meets Jennifer through the eyes of Elizabeth, the narrator who sees Jennifer feet first. Elizabeth describes them: 'They were just about the boniest feet I had ever seen. Swinging right in front of my eyes as if I were sitting in the first row at Cinerama.' But description takes the reader only to Jennifer's surface. Her words and actions are what take the reader inside to see her as a real person. Jennifer says things like

Witches convince they never argue. But I'll tell you this much. Real witches are Pilgrims and just because I don't have on a silly black costume and carry a silly broom and wear a silly black hat doesn't mean that I'm not a witch. I'm a witch all the time and not just on Halloween.

Jennifer does unique things too, like writing notes in the strangest script and operating masterfully on trick-or-treat night. Through the description, conversation, and action, the reader quickly comes to see Jennifer as a 'really sharp cookie.'

Characters are less fully developed in some of the books generally read to children and by children in the early primary grades. Still, in picture storybooks the reader generally finds one character or group of characters operating with some degree of unity, becoming the focus of story development. That character or characters, however, are painted with fewer dimensions and are less clearly delineated. Take the old tale by Marjorie Flack and Kurt Wiese *The Story About Ping*. Ping is a duck who lives on a wise-eyed boat on the Yangtze River and runs away from home for fear of being spanked. He is fearful at the beginning and middle segments of the tale, but at the end the little duckling faces up to his punishment and in so doing faces his fear. The story is short and about all a reader knows of Ping is his being afraid and alone. This is the single dimension of personality that the reader gets a chance to view, yet it is sufficient for the young child, who can still identify with a Ping.

Identifying with the Character Ability of the reader to identify with story characters is a major test of the effectiveness of characterization woven by a writer. Although many children have not experienced firsthand what it is like to grow up with a brother who is "special," they quickly identify with Betsy Byar's Sara in *Summer of the Swans*, who loves her retarded brother Charlie but suffers as well from feelings that she cannot fully describe, feelings that Betsy Byar puts into words like

It was the first time in her life that she had used the term *retarded* in connection with her brother and she looked quickly away from the figure in the white tent. Her face felt suddenly hot and she snapped a leaf from the rhododendron bush by the steps and held it against her forehead.

The reader of lines as powerful as these feels deeply with Sara, experiencing the pain and perhaps the hidden humiliation that Sara feels at that moment.

The stories that literally catch up the reader are ones in which such complete identification between reader and character can occur. In this respect though a book may have strong characterization what the reader brings to the story is equally important in achieving full identification. This clearly means that all good books are not good for all children. With the young child it matters not whether the main character is male or female the child is able to identify with Ping in all his adventures away from the security of home because fear and loneliness are feelings of childhood. With older children this is not so true for the problems of growing up male and the problems of growing up female are different. As a result some story characters are ones with which boys identify more easily others ones with which girls identify.

Despite these differences there are some characters who do attract a wide readership primarily because those characters are doing things that young readers wish they could be doing or are living through emotions at the very heart of the growing up experience. Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* has this kind of appeal because what youngster has not imagined what it would be like to do for just a day or two exactly what he/she has wanted? What youngster has not dreamed of being the hero of the moment? Likewise even though *Sunder* by William Armstrong is the story of what it feels like to grow up black in a time and place where being black means being poor and put upon it has almost universal appeal because of the intense emotion it triggers in the reader even though that reader may not have felt personally the rough hand of discrimination. The reader feels with the boy the man and the dog and in the process is changed even as the characters are changed by the events in the story.

Plot Charlotte Huck (1976) speaks of the importance of plot in fiction. She writes: Children ask first: Does the book tell a good story? The plot is the plan of action: it tells what the characters do and what happens to them. It is the thread that holds the fabric together.

Plot in Picture Storybooks Plot in books for the younger child is not complex. There tends to be one main sequence of events with few or no subplots to deflect attention from the main character and his/her actions. Generally too each new happening flows out of what has already transpired and to some extent the reader can anticipate what may occur and what the final outcome will be even though details may be absent. Take for example Sorche Nic Leodhas' *Alu ays Room for One More*. The story is simple. Lachie MacLachlan fills his wee house with every traveler that passed by his door hailing passers by with a cheery—

There's room galore
Och come awa in There's room for more
Always room for one more!

until the house tumbles down at which point Lachie MacLachlan and all his friends build a bonny new house where there is always room for one more. The reader senses almost from the start that more and more will fill the house and knows with certainty too that at the end Lachie MacLachlan will somehow always have room for more.

The same simplicity of plot is found in folk stories like *A Crocodile's Tale* by Jose and Ariane Aruego. From a trap Juan frees a crocodile that repays the kindness by announcing that it will eat Juan up. Juan tries one way after another to convince the crocodile to release him, but each time discovers that not everyone is always grateful. Finally with the assistance of the monkey, Juan escapes. From the beginning of the story the reader senses that Juan will not be food for the crocodile, and although the reader may not anticipate exactly how Juan will repay his benefactor, the monkey, the reader knows that Juan in the end will be grateful. In this as in many other books for the young child, the story develops in a straightforward fashion, coming to an end that is simple, yet satisfying.

Plot in Longer Books. Books for the middle grade elementary student generally retain a similar simplicity of plot. Some are episodic, with each chapter a separate entity relating another adventure in an ongoing series enjoyed by a major character, whose continued presence is the thread that ties the individual stories together. In a sense, episodic books are ideal for children just beginning to develop the attention span to stay with longer stories. Each chapter can be read separately, providing shorter units to be handled during a single reading or listening session. For younger children, two episodic books already mentioned in this chapter are *Pippi Longstocking* and *Homer Price*. Although more sophisticated, episodic too is Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

The youngster in upper grades is ready for greater complexity—a complexity supplied by books like Paula Fox's *The Slave Dancer*. These books differ from those previously described in that they do not develop in a strictly linear way, with each event centering on a main character or a group of closely related characters functioning as one. Rather, the development can be compared more to a river than to a line. In *The Slave Dancer* many events happening to other characters feed into the mainstream of events affecting the primary character Jessie, who narrates the story. These tributary events have powerful impact both on Jessie and the reader's perception of the situation.

Complexity of plot is seen too in other genres; for example, the mystery and science fiction enjoyed by upper graders. The reader here has a sense of joining with the main characters in figuring out the pieces of a disturbing puzzle. Read Jean George's *Who Really Killed Cock Robin?* and Virginia Hamilton's *The House of Dies Drear*, or Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* and *A Wind in the Door*. They are excellent examples of the way writers can weave a multitude of elements into a relatively complex design that tantalizes even the adult to read to the end.

Believability of Plot. The author's effectiveness in weaving plot can be judged in terms of how believable the story appears to the reader, regardless of whether events in the real world occur as they do in the book. The reader who slips down the rabbit hole with Alice quickly accepts all the strange things in this land of wonder. Lewis Carroll paints it with a brush stroke so sharp that the reader never says, "That couldn't happen." To the reader, it is happening and it can happen. This is particularly true of stories that blend fantasy with reality. A favorite is Leo Lionni's *Swimmy*, the short tale of a little black fish who inhabits the underwater realm of

medusas, lobsters, seaweed, eels, and sea anemones, nowhere in this realm are the little fish who have been Swimmy's friends, for the red fish have been gobbled up by the large tuna who lives in the deep. When Swimmy, lonely and friendless, meets a new school of red fish, he takes immediate action. He teaches them to swim together to resemble one big fish, with Swimmy serving as eye and leading the way. In this story, the sequence of events moves irrevocably toward the point where all the little fish will find a way to survive. This end is tremendously satisfying to adult and child-reader alike, for who has not felt the sting of being alone and of wanting friends to return? And in accepting the ending, the reader is saying — although deep down knowing better — "This could happen." In the realm of fantasy, unreal things do happen. Animals talk to one another, fish fly in response to the sounds of a magic violin, and funny little ladies even follow dumplings down a hole in the ground.

Theme. In Judith Viorst's *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, the reader learns that everyone has days when everything goes wrong. It was that way for Alexander, who on his terrible horrible, no good, very bad day, counted wrong, sang wrong, lost his best friend and discovered he needed a return visit to the dentist — just to name a few of the terrible things that happened. In Mirra Ginsburg's retelling of the Russian folktale *The Chick and the Duckling*, the young listener discovers that it doesn't pay to say "Me too" too often. Through Evaline Ness' *Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine*, the slightly older reader finds out that telling little lies can be dangerous. From Rosa Guy's *The Friends*, the upper elementary child learns that one has to give to make a friendship.

As Charlotte Huck (1976) points out, Theme provides a dimension to the story that goes beyond the action of the plot. It is the underlying meaning that unifies the story incidents and adds significance. Generally speaking, the successful writer communicates theme or meaning through happenings and characters rather than through an overt statement as in a fable. The reader of Leo Lionni's *Tico and the Golden Wings* is never told directly that one has to be willing to give in order to be accepted, but this is what Tico learns. He gives away his feathers of gold and in so doing becomes a bird with soft flying feathers just like all the other birds. In similar fashion Lorraine Beim and Jerrold Beim do not moralize about the advantages of cooperation in *Two Is a Team*, yet even the youngest listeners perceive the meaning.

Sometimes meanings are hidden more deeply below the surface with story characters, objects, and/or events representing real ones. This story form is the allegory, which can be interpreted at three levels: 1 on its surface, with readers and listeners simply reacting to story events that excite the imagination, 2 in terms of general meaning or theme communicated, or 3 in symbolic terms, with consideration given to what the characters or events stand for in the real world.

A number of books being read to and by children in upper grades are actually allegories. Children in grades four and above have appreciated Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* since it made its first appearance in 1970. They have realized that Jonathan symbolizes the creative nonconformist who wants to try for uncharted paths. Robert

Adams *Watership Down* was first published in England as a children's book. It is an adventure story filled with suspenseful and fearful moments, but children in upper grades realize that there is more to the story than this — that the book is saying something about the need to listen to the weak ones, the need to live together in harmony, the need for control over one's own destiny. Beyond that, the allegorical rabbits in *Watership Down* symbolize human traits. Similarly, the characters in Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows* — Rat, Mole, Badger, Toad — symbolize characteristics usually associated with people, characteristics like generosity and vanity.

There are, of course, less sophisticated allegories for children. *Tico of the Golden Wings* is essentially an allegory with Tico at first symbolizing society's outcast and later the person who finds that material things alone do not necessarily produce happiness. The golden feathers represent possessions. Rona Zandell introduced her fifth graders to allegory through *Tico*. Her students let their imaginations spin as they brainstormed all sorts of symbolic relationships between story happenings and real life. They even went on to compose their own allegories.

Clearly, elementary children will at first react to stories more in terms of concrete story events and underlying themes than symbolic meanings, but as young people from age ten or eleven begin to handle what Piaget has called *formal operations*, to think in the abstract, they will at times find it exciting to go below the story surface to toy with symbolic meanings. As Rona Zandell discovered in her classroom, some picture storybooks are allegories with hidden symbolism that upper elementary students can understand and enjoy. These kinds of literary encounters contribute to children's cognitive development; symbolic literature has the potential to carry young people beyond the concrete and into the realm of the abstract.

Verbal Style In *A New Look at Children's Literature* (1972), William Anderson and Patrick Groff state "The foremost determinant of literary effectiveness is language. Only through language can literature communicate, whether written or spoken, the essence of literature is always verbal. Through language the author communicates plot, character, and theme. Descriptive passages bring into visual focus a character's outward appearance, emotions felt. Aspects of setting, Dialogue carries the plot forward and provides clues to the characters' personalities and points of view. Specific words and their ordering set the story mood. Repeated words, phrases and sentences may propel the plot onward, establish a tone, and provide sounds pleasant to the reader's inner ear. Words are the paint of the writer who must dip into his/her pot to find just the right combinations of meanings and sounds to create a harmonious verbal picture on the page."

Word Sounds Especially in books enjoyed by younger children, word sounds play a major part. Theodor Geisel, better known to children and adults as the familiar Dr. Seuss, is a master of sounds built into stories. Dr. Seuss tells stories with a rhythmic rhyming that is so natural that an oral reader feels the words must always have belonged

together in exactly that order. Seuss plays with alliteration and rhyme to achieve special effects, for example, it is Horton who hatches the egg and Lazy Mazy who claims it in the end in the marvelously silly, yet meaningful, *Horton Hatches the Egg*. Humor is achieved too through repetition, sometimes relatively simple, as in 'My goodness! My gracious! My word!' and sometimes through more involved repetition, as in the recurring line 'An elephant's faithful one hundred percent!' In some cases too Seuss adds to the fun by borrowing a brush from Lewis Carroll and inventing a word or two to achieve the precise combinations of sounds needed within the story. In other cases, he relies on onomatopoeic words: *whizz, thumping, bumping, squeak, crack*.

Many of the sound effects splashed in large scale within the stories of Dr. Seuss are painted with a muted brush within other stories that children in elementary grades enjoy. Ezra Jack Keats in *The Snowy Day* tells how Peter's feet sank into the snow with a crunch, crunch, crunch, how the snow fell "plop" on Peter, how Peter thought and thought and thought. These words make the reader feel peaceful and happy, just the way Peter must have felt as he went out into the first snow of winter. Robert McCloskey paints with a similarly muted word brush filled with sounds. In *Make Way for Ducklings* the ducks wade ashore and "waddle along," the ducklings are named Jack, Mack, Lack, Mack, Nack, and the sounds of ducklings fill the pages. In Ludwig Bemelmans' *Madeline's Rescue* the head of the board of trustees is Lord Cucuface, and the repeating rhyming line "For the second time that night, Miss Clavell turned on the light" adds not only to the build up of suspense, but also to the sound sensations that are part of the story.

Word Meanings Through verbal style an author establishes whether the story deals with fantasy or reality. Open to the first page of Virginia Lee Burton's *The Little House*, Ms. Burton begins: "Once upon a time there was a Little House way out in the country. She was a pretty Little House and she was strong and well built. With this matter of fact beginning, the author suggests that here is a story about real things and events, even though this house can think and talk. Contrast that opening with Lewis Carroll's beginning to *Through the Looking Glass*:

One thing was certain that the white kitten had had nothing to do with it — it was the black kitten's fault entirely. For the white kitten had been having its face washed by the old cat for the last quarter of an hour (and bearing it pretty well considering) so you see that it couldn't have had any hand in the mischief.

The style of the writing, more than its substance, hints that an excursion into a wonderland is in the offing.

Through artful word choice and patterning, an author adds humor. Open to that marvelously comic description of the way Jennifer goes out to trick-or-trick in Konigsburg's *Jennifer, Heerle, Mackbeth, William McKinley, and Me*, Elizabeth Short staccato sentences placed back to

back in rapid succession communicate the efficient technique that Jennifer adopts to assure that she goes home laden with treats. Konigsburg has the art of tongue-in-cheek humor firmly under her control. So does Judith Viorst, who uses lengthy "running-out-of-breath" sentences to achieve humor. Remember just the first sentence of *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*.

I went to sleep with gum in my mouth and now there's gum in my hair and when I got out of bed this morning I tripped on the skateboard and by mistake I dropped my sweater in the sink while the water was running and I could tell it was going to be a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.

What a mouthful! And what marvelous humor — one that middle graders appreciate.

It is through word choice and patterning, moreover, that an author sets the stage for action. Listen to the pictures of Maine that Robert McCloskey paints with beautiful words in *Time of Wonder* and in *One Morning in Maine*. Listen as well to Alvin Tresselt's *White Snow, Bright Snow* and to Berta and Elmer Hader's *The Big Snow* to see the world of winter created in the mind's eye through the magic of word pictures. Walk along Golden MacDonald's *The Little Island* to listen to the wind, waves, and birds that the author has created there. Masters of the art of complete and realistic description — McCloskey, the Haders, Tresselt, and MacDonald — carry the reader along new paths to perceive the world through fresh eyes.

Pictorial Style Readers of *Time of Wonder*, *The Big Snow*, and *The Little Island* find that their experience with literature is heightened by illustrations. Books for the younger child tend to be picture stories in which meaning is communicated through both words and pictures, and in which pictures at times dominate. The importance of the pictures in these books is indicated by the fact that each has been recognized for artistic excellence by being awarded the Caldecott Medal, presented yearly by the American Library Association to "the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children." This is in contrast to the Newberry Medal, awarded each year to the author who has made the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.

A Variety of Styles What kinds of pictures do younger children enjoy in their books? There is really no one answer to that question, for every generalization is contradicted by books that do not abide by it at all. Children are attracted by the bright colors found often in the illustrations of George McDermott, Eric Carle, Jose and Arane Aruego, and Pat Hutchins. Children are drawn too by the softness of color found in Nonny Hogrogian's illustrations for *Always Room for One More* and a reliance on one color as in Robert McCloskey's *Blueberries for Sal*, which indicates in its title the color that predominates the book. They appreciate Arnold Lobel's striking black and white illustrations for the 1972 Caldecott Honor Book *Hildilid's Night*. Likewise, no one artistic medium has the greatest appeal. There is a cartoonlike effect about much of Theodor Geisel's art, especially in the bold and

brush drawings in *Horton Hatches the Egg* mentioned previously. Margaret Zemach turns to an ink line with a soft wash effect to achieve the comiclike illustrations of *Duffy and the Devil* and *The Judge*. Collage is a popular medium of picture book illustrators, handled with perfection by Leo Lionni in *Swimmy* and more recently in his *Pezzettino* and by Eric Carle in *The Secret Birthday Message*. All these techniques can lead to heightened reader involvement in the story if the pictures are in keeping with the mood of the story and help to carry the story forward.

Harmonizing Words and Pictures This last point is perhaps the only generalization that is true in almost every instance: pictures should be in perfect harmony with the verbal storyline and at times supplement the story being told with words. Illustrators achieve this harmony in a number of ways. One is to use color or the lack of it to blend with story meanings. Peter Parnell has done this most effectively in *The Mountain*, the story of how people devastate the land. At the beginning Parnell's illustrations are bright with greens, yellows, and oranges that disappear from the successive illustrations as people destroy the forests, build roads, and litter the environment. Soon the world portrayed in the illustrations is a black and white one. But Parnell offers hope in the end — one little spark of green amidst the colorless world. Even young children can perceive the significance of the illustrations in the story. In one classroom, Joan Klein's preschoolers listened and looked during the oral sharing of *The Mountain*, then they talked about whether the story was a happy or sad one and how they knew it to be so. Later individually they crayoned two pictures each, one showing a happy scene, the other the same scene turned sad.

A similar selective use of color is seen in numbers of books. Take for example, two Caldecott winners. In Arlene Mosel's *The Funny Little*

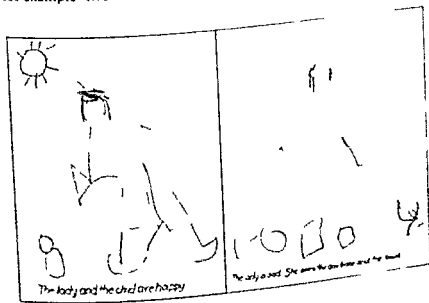


FIGURE 3.1
Happy, Sad pictures
drawn in response to
Parnell's *The Mountain*

Woman Blair Lent's illustrations washed in soft greens, yellows, and browns clearly show where the action is occurring. When the funny little woman is tucked cozily away in her little house, it is filled with color, but when she falls down the hole after her dumpling, the under-world blooms with color and the little house appears as a black and white pen sketch, probably as it remained in the woman's memory while she lived in the realm of the "oni." At the point, however, when the woman escapes to the upper, real world, the lower one fades into black and white, while color lights up the little house once again. In Beatrice Schenck de Regnier's *May I Bring a Friend?* Beni Montresor splashes color all over the page at the arrival of each friend to tea, lunch, breakfast, and dinner. The stark white of the invitation pages contrasts strikingly with the pinks, oranges, reds, and yellows of the actual events.

A second way that illustrators harmonize pictures and story is through size. In Seuss' *And to Think that I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, the pictures get larger and larger as Marco's imagination takes over, returning to normal size only when Marco relates to his father what he actually saw on Mulberry Street. Similarly in Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, the pictures occupy more and more of the page as Max travels farther and farther from his very own room into the land of the wild things.

Pictures and words should harmonize in detail, as well. When Max becomes king of the wild things, Sendak shows Max wearing a crown. When Peter in *The Snowy Day* walks with his feet pointing out like 'this,' and then pointing in like 'that,' Keats shows tracks in the snow doing just this and "that." And when Squire Lovel of Trove in *Duffy and the Devil* loses all the clothes that his wife has contracted with the devil to make for him, Margot Zemach shows a squire clothed only in shoes, clutching a hat in front of him. Not only should details of story be reflected in the illustrations, but also illustrations should supply additional detail. Books like Arnold Lobel's *On the Day Peter Stuyvesant Sailed into Town* and Peter Spier's *Erne Canal and The Star Spangled Banner* are filled with intricate detail that supplies more information about setting than do the words.

In books for upper grade readers pictures play a lesser but still significant role. In many cases the pictures are pen and ink sketches scattered sparingly through the book. The effect, however, can be powerful as in *The Slave Dancer*, here Eros Keith's illustrations are stark, communicating a sense of overwhelming horror. In Yoshiko Uchida's *Journey to Topaz*, the story of a Japanese-American child's internment in a U.S. detention camp during World War II, Donald Carrick's sketches establish a mood of sorrow that permeates the book. And it is James Barkley's illustrations that communicate the absolute barrenness of everyday existence for the man, the boy, the woman, and the dog in William Armstrong's *Souder*.

Selecting Books to Share and Recommend. Character plot, theme, verbal style, and pictorial style are important aspects of books to consider in selecting those to share and recommend. Additionally in book selec-

tion some concern should be given to introducing children to a variety of literary forms. Constantine Georgiou (1969) has identified seven categories of literature that belong in elementary classrooms

- picture books and picture storybooks in which pictures and words blend to tell a story
- poetry in which ideas are fused with music
- folktales, fairy tales, myths, legends, and fables — stories that have a "deep understanding of real life at their base" and "mirror in fanciful form the universal truths and passions of humankind"
- fantasy — "full-length works that bring magic and the irrational into the everyday world"
- historical stories in which life in the past is reconstructed
- realistic stories in which life is brought into clearer focus
- informational literature — material that presents information with "style and visual artistry", biography fits here

Quite clearly, these are not precisely differentiated divisions. Indeed folktales and poems are often presented in picture book format. At the same time the line between fantasy and fairy tale is not distinct and informational literature sometimes blends into realistic stories. The divisions, however, do indicate the scope of curricular experiences that children should have with literature, elementary school children should have the opportunity to dip into all the categories to taste a bit from each.

Little has been said in this chapter about how to evaluate forms like poetry or informational literature, both part of elementary school literary experiences. Obviously there will be different emphases. Looking at informational literature, one must think more of accuracy than plot and characterization, whereas looking at poetry, one must consider the uniqueness of the images. In all forms of literature, of course, verbal style is a highly significant factor. After all words are at the heart of the literary experience, and it is in terms of the way the writer handles words that he/she is ultimately judged.

Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Select at least three recent Newberry award-winning or Honor Books (the runners-up) to read and think about in terms of the criteria described in this chapter
- Study at least five recent Caldecott award winning or Honor Books to see how pictures and words harmonize to tell the story
- Read a selection from each of Constantine Georgiou's seven categories of literature identified above. Set up a reading plan like this:
 - 1 picture storybooks *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* written by Verna Aardema with illustrations by Leo and Diane Dillon (Dial, 1975)

- 2 poetry *My Own Rhythm* by Ann Atwood (Scribner's, 1973)
- 3 folk- and fairy tales *Cinderella* illustrated by Marcia Brown (Harper Row, 1954)
- 4 fantasy Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
- 5 historical stories *My Brother Sam Is Dead* by James Collier and Christopher Collier (Four Winds, 1974)
- 6 realistic stories *Of Love and Death and Other Journeys* by Isabelle Holland (Lippincott, 1975)
- 7 informational literature *Paddle to the Sea* by Holling C. Holling (Houghton Mifflin, 1941)

The Instructional Potential of Books

Because literature is the aesthetic ordering of human existence expressed through words and language patterns, books offer the reader a limitless opportunity to explore life in all its ramifications and to explore words and word patterns in all their beauty. Exploration into the intricacies of language and life belong in classrooms, it is in the context of these explorations that teachers must consider books not only as a source of reading pleasure, but as a stepping stone to other curricular experiences. Thinking of literature in these terms, teachers must go beyond literary criteria to consider also the instructional potential of books.

Releasing the Potential of Books. A book like Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*—the book that four year old Amy chose to hear—has literary qualities that make it a joy to hear and see. It also contains information that introduces the young child to the changes that transform a caterpillar into a butterfly and is a fine material for stimulating creative art and language production. Let us look now at ways to release this potential.

The Word Potential of Books Some books lend themselves easily to word plays through which children perceive word relationships and grow in word power, even as they delight in the activity. The teacher can, for instance, choose a book like McCloskey's *Make Way for Ducklings* in which there is a repetition of *-ack* sounds to help children see how this sound is built into words. Youngsters who have already heard the story can pay a return visit to listen for all the *-acks*—*Jack, Kack, Lack, Mack, Nack, Quack, Pack, Ouack*—that make the listener almost hear the ducks in the story. They can print the *-ack* words on duck shapes that they attach to a cord stretched across the upper reaches of classroom space, and they can brainstorm other *-ack* words to be added to the crowded duck line: *black, sack, slack, tack, lack, clack, track, stack, shack*. When the line is full, children can add a summary sentence card at the end—something like 'Mallard ducks are the ackety, ackety, ackety birds.' The result is poemlike so that youngsters can chorus all the words and the terminal sentence, giving the words a rhythmic beat as they recite. And when they are done, they talk out another young duckling's adventure and cooperate in an oral storymaking, weaving *-ack* words from the duck line.

into their yarn so that it, like *Make Way for Ducklings* is sound filled. Follow-up activities on successive days can include writing down the class story, dreaming up and writing down an individual -ack story, viewing a full color filmloop that presents marvelous shots of mallard ducks, and thinking up words to describe ducks viewed on the loop. Again the words can become part of the physical classroom environment, filling up an entire wall where they serve as an idea trigger for youngsters continuing to sketch, write, and read more about ducklings in preparation for a visit to a local pond where mallard ducks may be nesting.

Many books — especially picture storybooks that can be shared orally — have the same potential as *Make Way for Ducklings* for stimulating creative activity with words. Explore Verna Aardema's *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*. Since the story is an African folk tale Aardema has relied on the Ashanti technique of repeating words and sounds for emphasis. Upper graders can play with this technique in their own writing while lower graders can return to the book after an initial listening session and contribute the repeated sounds in the appropriate spots. Explore too Peter Max's *The Land of Blue* and *The Land of Red* books that are a riot of color and of sounds. Words like *whooooop, zoooooop, a heecccc*, *zippy zappy, wham, wowie* strike the ear, as sharp colors and shapes strike the eye. Children who have seen and heard one of these Max books can dream up their own onomatopoeic words.

Many books too are perfect for involving children in creating original descriptions. Barbara Cooney's *Chanticleer and the Fox* — an adaptation from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* — is a marvelous description of the proud rooster named Chanticleer. Cooney tells that Chanticleer's crowing was 'more trustworthy than a clock, that his comb was redder than fine coral,' that his bill "shone like jet," that his feathers were like burnished gold. Youngsters who have met this mighty bird can create together a similar description of the fox who appears later in the story. Eventually, working from full color pictures cut from calendars they can think and write out other descriptions on their own — descriptions filled with creative comparisons in the style of Barbara Cooney.

The Syntactic Potential of Books Other books lend themselves more easily to plays with the patterning of words in sentences, through this kind of follow-up exploration into language, children learn to handle sentence patterns that they have not tended to use in their own writing. A humorous selection for this purpose is George Mendoza's *The Gillygoofang*. You probably have met the ridiculous gillygoofang who bewildered all the trout in the brook, not because it swam backward to keep the water out of its eyes, but because it changed colors to trick the bigger fish. Mendoza repeats this pattern throughout the short story, each time adding more "not because's" and changing the final 'because' clause. The result is as much a play with a sentence pattern as it is a story. Children in middle grades delight in the ridiculousness of the gillygoofang and enjoy proposing similar plays with this recurring sentence pattern first orally and then individually on paper. One group composed a version that began





The Flibbydoo

Once upon a time there was a strange flibbydoo who liked to stand on its head. The mice laughed at the flibbydoo not because it liked to stand on its head, but because it would do an upside down dance at the same time. The ants laughed at the flibbydoo not because it liked to stand on its head and would do an upside down dance at the same time, but because it was always sneezing. The owl laughed at the flibbydoo not because it liked to stand on its head and would do an upside-down dance and was always sneezing but because it wiggled its ears.

Stories based on *The Gillygoofang* are fun to illustrate. Children who have composed one can break it into sentence units, with individual youngsters selecting units to illustrate visually.

Nathan Zimelman's *The Lives of My Cat Alfred*, illustrated by Evaline Ness, has a similar syntactic potential for stimulating structured writing. Zimelman has relied on the pattern "It wouldn't surprise me if you _____," that he has repeated again and again, each time with a different end. Once young people see how Zimelman has created a striking effect through this repetitive patterning, they enjoy experimenting with the pattern, using content of their own devising. Other books to explore to discover patterns for children's writing are Leo Lionni's *A Color of His Own*, Barbara Emberley's *Drummer Hoff* and Beatrice Schenk De Regniers' *Something Special*. The patterns in these books are simple enough even for the primary child to handle.

The Story Potential of Books. Still other books open up to children unique dimensions in storymaking that they can draw upon in their own story production activity. Two of Eric Carle's books, *The Secret Birthday Message* and *I See a Song* are examples in point. In *The Secret Birthday Message* Tim discovers a coded message replete with

a  and a  and a  and a . He must decipher

the meaning of the symbols in order to find his birthday gift. The successive pages are filled with cut-out and cut-up collages of these shapes that Tim follows before finding the gift and tracing his way back. In *I See a Song* a violinist announces at the beginning what he sees, paints, hears, touches, and what may happen. He urges the viewer to let the imagination fly to see a song. And the pages that follow are a myriad of color and a fantasy of shapes in which a child viewer can surely see a song, perhaps as he/she hears one on a recording that fills the room with real music. Children who have seen and heard *The Secret Birthday Message* can create original secret messages replete with coded shapes and then reveal the meaning of the shapes on pages of their own stories. Children who have experienced the sensations of *I See a Song* can write similar kinds of announcements and go on to paint songs to which they are listening.

It is through experiences like these that children come to a complete appreciation of all the literary forms available to them. The kinds of activities described in conjunction with the Carle material assist young people in perceiving the essence of the picture storybook especially upper

The Drama Potential of Books Because much of the drama of life is reflected in the drama of books, stories have the potential to stimulate classroom playmaking. Some appear to have been constructed almost with this end in mind. Take, for example, Charlotte Pomerantz's *The Day They Parachuted Cats on Borreo*, which Jose Aruego has illustrated. Each page is related by a different member of the story cast, and as a result children who have read or listened to it can easily slip into the role of one of these story-tellers to improvise a monolog told from a character's point of view. Ed Emberley's *Punch and Judy* presents material for dramatizing this slim, little book actually is a script that can be converted easily into a puppet play.

In addition, chapters in the episodic books previously described in this chapter are fine for dramatizing. An afternoon of pleasure can result from groups preparing playlets based on different episodes from books like *Homer Price* or *Pippi Longstocking* or from a newer, satirical book like Achim Broger's *Bruno*, which contains outrageous chapters "Bruno and the Mirror," "Bruno and the Laugh," "Bruno Goes Traveling," and "Bruno Loses His Head." Since all groups will be working with the same characters, young people begin to see differences in the way a character can be portrayed and viewed. If young people are playing with a character like Bruno, they will simultaneously be learning something about satire as well.

The View-Expanding Potential of Books Young people can expand their feelings and thoughts by exploring freely and fully in books. Because books illuminate life in all its hardships and delights, books can supply vicarious experience through which young people can develop extended insights and views.

In Children's Literature An Issues Approach Masha Rudman (1976) describes some of the significant issue areas found in modern children's literature: sibling relations, divorce, death and old age, war, sex, minorities, and the role of females. These issues are popular with today's authors, particularly with those writing for young people. Treatment of issues related to everyday living extends from the conventional to the highly controversial, as a result there is hardly a topic that has not been treated in books being read by young people. Then too, the reader no longer can expect that all problems will be neatly resolved by book's end, that good will triumph, and that evil will be punished. Often the reader is left to sort out loose ends.

A quick trip along the shelves of the children's section of most public libraries will supply evidence of the extended treatment afforded some highly controversial issues in books widely available. One may find the popular volume, *Go Ask Alice*, the anonymous diary of a fifteen year old, middle-class girl who turns to drugs and sex and finally dies of an overdose, probably given her by "friends." One may find *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier, the story of one young man's attempt to stick to his guns and not conform to the going gang system in his middle-class and Catholic high school. This book ends in the wail of an ambulance siren and the blur of blood as Jerry, the hero, is taken to the hospital after a fight witnessed by Brother Leon, who stands back out of fear for his own position. One may find Norma Klein's *Mom, the Wolf Man and Me*, the

beauty products and food. In contrast, men are depicted in more active pursuits — participating in sports, going to work, doing many jobs.

Dan Donlan (1972) examined much of the folk- and fairy tale literature as well as the nursery rhymes that children generally read in their early years. He concluded that the females depicted were of two types: 'the sweet little old lady and the beautiful, young heroine — both of whom are lovably incompetent.' To Donlan's types one could add the wicked witch who symbolizes evil. Alleen Nilsen (1971) found much the same in 58 randomly selected picture books published during the last 20 years. In 25 of these a woman was featured in the illustrations, of the 25 depictions only 4 did not show the woman wearing an apron. "Of these four without aprons, one was a nun, another a queen knitting, another an Indian squaw stirring a pot, and another a mother taking her children outside." On the other hand, one positive finding has emerged from studies being done on sexism in children's books. Lenore Weitzman (1972) investigated stereotyping in Caldecott and Newberry Award winners, after extensive analysis, she reported that "The Caldecott winners are clearly less stereotyped than the average book, and do not include the most blatant examples of sexism."

There is a second form that sex-role typing takes in books — featuring boys and men in stories and illustrations. Schnell and Sweeney (1975) studied the distribution of males and females in the Houghton Mifflin Readers published in 1971. They discovered that 51% of the stories featured boys and 26% featured adult males, whereas only 9.4% featured boys and girls, 12.5% featured girls, and only 1.3% featured adult females. The same slanted distribution was found in the illustrations and the scope of the adult occupations: 70.5% of the illustrations showed males while 29.5% showed females, 84.8% of the adult occupations depicted were male-filled, whereas only 15.2% were female filled. Just as overwhelming was the listing of actual occupations filled by adult males and females, nine different occupations were shown filled by females in stories while fifty-two different occupations were depicted as filled by males.

The significance of the roles assigned men and women in books has been noted by numbers of writers. Daniel Dieterich (1972) writing in *Elementary English* elaborated on a point stated earlier by Mavis Davis:

It is widely acknowledged that the child's self image is created in the early or formative years, and that it is partly through books that this image is formed. It is also widely acknowledged that the child's image of other races and of the other sex is influenced by the books he or she reads at this time.

Minority Stereotyping Not only do books provide the reader with a limited and distorted view of the role of women, but books provide stereotyped images of most minorities. In the first place, until rather recently few books for children included main characters who are members of racial or religious minorities. Secondly, until rather recently few books showed adult members of minority groups operat

ing within the full range of available occupations and children from minorities carrying out normal childhood playtime pursuits. Even today the number of books featuring American blacks, Indians, Mexicans, Chinese, or Hawaiians remains small, and of those books that feature minorities, few depict adult females and males pursuing careers in many of the highly respected professions. The recent increase particularly in illustrated books that feature minority characters has been primarily in the folktale department, with African and Mexican stories becoming popular.

One of the first books to break through the iron curtain of silence about minorities on the American scene was *Tuo Is a Team* by Lorraine and Jerrold Beim. A picture storybook of the 1940s, it relates an ordinary friendship between Ted and Paul, two little boys — one who happens to be black, the other white. Another landmark was Ezra Jack Keats' *The Snowy Day* that tells of the delight of Peter, a little black boy, out in the snow. Since then there have been other books about Peter by Keats as well as other books about interracial friendship, about discrimination, about members of minority groups handling the day to day problems of living. There have been books like June Jordan's *His Own Where*, in which dialog is written in black dialect. But the numbers appearing have only scratched the surface. Children need many more books in which racial minorities are shown in a wide range of everyday pursuits if they are to acquire a view of the world and of people adequate in scope to meet the realities of life within a pluralistic society.

Instructional Implications In selecting books to share with children, teachers must become more aware of the covert and sometimes overt messages books send to readers about the role of people in society. Sometimes teachers are so accustomed to hearing and expressing stereotypes that they fail to see evidence in classroom books and in their own behavior. For example, many have not questioned the stereotype of the older woman perpetuated in children's books. Barbara Grant's study (1974) of 20 picture storybooks portraying older women indicated that older women in children's stories tend to talk to themselves or to animal companions, act in strange and ridiculous ways, engage in domestic activities, and live by themselves. Other characters in the stories tend to snicker, smile, run away from the older person, and complain that she is a nuisance or a bit odd.

The dilemma of the educator faced with this kind of stereotyping is not easy to resolve. Most of the folk- and fairy tale literature of the past gives a stereotyped view of the world. Should schools discard it? Should they rewrite it? Charlotte Huck (1976) has taken an appealing middle of the road position on this issue. In *Children's Literature in the Elementary School* (1976) she has remarked:

There is no point in denouncing fairy tales for their sexist portrayal of beautiful young girls waiting for the arrival of their princes, for evil step mothers or nagging wives. Such stories reflected the longings and beliefs of a society long past. To change the folktales would be to destroy our traditional heritage. [But] Today's books must reflect a more liberated point of view.



Ads to book select on
Children's Books in Print
(New York: Bowker
revised annually)
Subject Guide to
Children's Books in Print
(New York: Bowker
revised annually)

To expand children's horizons beyond the traditional stereotyped views, schools need to help children become "image wise." Barbara Grant (1976) suggested that young people conduct searches to identify for themselves components of the images being projected by books, that they identify books with the most blatant sex or minority stereotyping and give a "stereotyped image award," that they have the opportunity to meet face to face people who contradict the images delivered by both books and the media. In addition, young people can keep alert to stereotyped views expressed in classroom discussion, on television, and in informal conversations, they can write and/or draw stories of their own that show people of many races, of all ages, and of both sexes functioning in a wide variety of roles.

The Goals Sought — A Summary Thought or Two

Writing about how he views the stories that he composes and illustrates for children, Leo Lionni has remarked



See "Leo Lionni" in
Contemporary Authors
 (Detroit: Gale, 1975) vol. 5
 53-56 pp. 380-81

When I have a story in mind I am not conscious of the average age of my potential readers. I believe in fact that a good children's book should appeal to all people who have not completely lost their original joy and wonder in life. The fact is that I really don't make books for children at all. I make them for that part of us — of myself and of my friends, which has never changed — which is still a child.

Teachers must hang on tightly to their original joy and wonder in life, to that part of them which is still a child. Managing that, men and women bring assets to teaching: interest in the little things found all around like mushrooms, measuring worms, and minnows, a delight in the sounds of language, an intense desire to find out, a commitment to understand people and living, and, ultimately, a love of books that reflect the things, the people, the sounds of life and language. Without this love of books, teachers find it hard to instill a similar love in children — a love that is, after all, a fundamental goal of language arts instruction. They find it difficult, too, to achieve other goals they have in mind when bringing children and books together: that children —

- appreciate excellence in the writing and illustrations they find in books
- read widely in diverse literary materials
- gain ability to write in many different forms (poetry, picture story, fable, realistic story, and so forth)
- gain ability to communicate through vocabulary and sentence patterns expanded through contact with diverse patterns and varied content
- gain ability to interpret and evaluate stories
- expand their horizons to explore every area of human endeavor and come to a widened view of the world and of living
- expand their perceptions beyond traditional stereotyped views

Teachers, in addition, must keep in mind that the child reader's response to literature is determined by a number of interrelated factors.

tors the three most basic being the characteristics of the reader the qualities built into the literary selection and the nature of the reading situation To achieve the varied goals of a literature program teachers must become increasingly aware of how each of these factors affects the child's literary response

Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Search the library to uncover one book to fit each of the following categories
 - 1 a book with high potential for developing children's interest in words
 - 2 a book with high potential for building children's skill in handling a particular sentence pattern
 - 3 a book with the potential to stimulate storymaking or poetrymaking in children
 - 4 a book that could lead easily into classroom drama activity
 - 5 a book that you could read to and discuss with upper elementary youngsters to expand their perception of an issue important today
 - 6 a book that you could use in conjunction with an audiovisual material you have available
 - 7 a book with a stereotyped image of one group of people and a book with a broader view of that same group
 - 8 a book you could integrate into a larger experience in natural or social science study

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Part 3

ways to make
communication
come into action
in elementary
classrooms.

Chapter 4

Making Listening Happen —
Following It As You Say It

Chapter 5

Oral Sharing: Stories, Poems, Humor, Facts,
Ideas — Far from Dry

Chapter 6

Thinking, Talking, and Writing Together —
Drawing a Muchness

Chapter 7

Creative Thinking and Creative Writing —
Adventures in Wonderland

Chapter 8

Writing Skillfully — Saying What You Mean

Chapter 9

Understanding Language and Language
Usage — Managing the Whole Lot

Chapter 10

Spelling, Handwriting, and Dictionary
Delving — Catching a Bandersnatch!

Chapter 11

Developing Reading Skills —
Making Print a Language They Know

Making listening happen—following it as you say it

All was quiet in the second grade classroom. Every child had eyes riveted on Barbara Schwartz, the teacher, for this was storytime! "Once upon a time," began Ms. Schwartz, making her voice sound slightly mysterious and far away, "there was a bright and beautiful girl named Cinderella. Cinderella lived with her mean stepmother and her two mean stepsisters . . ."

As the teacher introduced the familiar fairy tale, she took from a basket sitting on the floor nearby a sizable piece of blue construction paper cut in the shape of a shirt. On it was a picture of Cinderella with stepsisters and stepmother. Ms. Schwartz reached into the pocket of a clothespin smock she had donned for storytelling and pulled out two clip clothespins. With them she attached the paper shirt to a length of plastic clothesline she had strung across the room and then said, "Now Cinderella was the hardest working girl you could imagine. Her stepmother and sisters made her work day in and day out scrubbing and cleaning, tending the fire, carrying water from the well . . ."

Continuing with the words of the story, Ms. Schwartz again reached into the basket, taking from it a piece of yellow construction paper that was cut in the shape of a big sock and that bore a picture of a hard-working Cinderella. She clipped the sock to the storyline as the second graders inched forward in their seats to hear and see what she would say and do next.

As the story unfolded, Barbara Schwartz continued to add piece after piece to the line. By the time she had related the tale, the line was a myriad of color, full of paper trousers, socks, dresses, shirts, skirts, and towels that sequentially told the story in picture form.

The teacher called for volunteers to retell the story and simultaneously to remove the wash from the "storyline." Boys and girls eagerly came forward, as each in turn removed a paper garment. As she retold the story event associated with the photocopied picture on the piece. Children who had not had the opportunity to participate in the retelling asked if they could hang the story again. This they did, repeating it in their own words.

Afterwards the youngsters paired off into conversation mates to talk informally about the story. Each member of a pair was to share with the other a favorite part or character explaining why he/she had particularly liked that segment or character. Then each was to be prepared to tell the whole class the part or person chosen by his/her cohort and the reason for the choice.

The quiet of storytelling time was replaced by a cacophony of voices. Once the teacher had to strike a chord on the piano to gain attention. She reminded the class that in conversing voices should be kept confidentially low. She also reminded students to listen with care so that they could relate what they were being told.

Conversation time was relatively short. Children regrouped to share. Presenters were able to tell in general about the part or person chosen by their mates. The reasons given for the choices, however, were not very clear with statements such as "He liked him" and "She was nice" prevailing. This could be expected from what is known about children's typical response to literature at this stage of cognitive development (see chapter 3).

On successive days Ms. Schwartz's second graders went on in groups to concoct original stories to replace *Cinderella* on the storyline. Children cut out shirts, pants, aprons, and so forth from colored construction paper and mounted key story words on the pieces. Later they orally shared their stories with listening classmates as they hung their own wash on the line. Again after some story sharings youngsters paired off to talk together about favorite characters and parts, regrouping to relate to the larger group their mate's preferences.

Involving Children in the Dynamics of Listening

On the morning Barbara Schwartz shared *Cinderella* with her second graders, the children listened with rapt attention, stretching forward in their chairs and following with their eyes the story pieces being hung on the line. When they retold the story, they included numerous details and some of the exact words their teacher had used in storytelling. When discussing in pairs, they willingly proffered opinions. For them the time not only proved a pleasurable encounter with literature and a springboard into writing, it was an opportunity to grow in listening skill through active purpose-filled participation.

Active Listening Listening in classrooms should be an active involved process with students reacting and responding rather than passively receiving. Active listening goes beyond reception and even retention of words and ideas to express themselves in some way, thing with those words and ideas. It requires listeners to do something with those words and ideas. In classroom listening, where students are involved rather intimately with one another, active listening is demonstrated both verbally and nonverbally. Thomas Faix (1975) suggests that a physical or vocal expression of feeling, a cooperative working with others in a group, an expression of acceptance toward others in the group, and an expression of a desire to keep an open mind are signs of active listening.

reca ng convey sal on a deta l

sequenc ng events in or g n al sto es

ing Other signs include asking clarifying questions, sticking to the topic of discussion, and actively seeking out new ideas and understandings during discussion In classrooms listening response at times may be even more overt and easy to distinguish Children may respond physically by choosing, manipulating, or organizing materials, by purposefully using their own bodies to respond, by moving spontaneously in reaction They may respond by interacting, telling, retelling, writing, dramatizing, drawing, reading — in a word, *doing*

Franklin Ernst (1968) proposes that listeners' response is almost continuous if they are fully attending to a message He states "Listening is an activity evidenced by movement on the part of the not-now-talking person It is manifested in the behavior by the physical visible motion of the listener's body To listen is to move, to be in motion for the words of the talker"

Visible motion takes the form of a change in body position, a movement of muscles in rhythm with the speaker's sentences, a change in eye and facial expression The truly involved listener is active mentally, an activity reflected in physical behavior

Characteristics inherent in the classroom situation itself, in the teacher and in the students determine how actively involved in listening children become As first factors, Faix (1975) mentions class size, the physical design of classroom space, and time of day Large class size conceivably can limit opportunities for active listening emerging out of involved discussions and stimulating presentations, but opportunities still exist A physical barrier that cuts down eye contact and movement among participants has a similar potential for interfering with interaction and positive listening Then too children are more alert and listen more actively during morning hours, they are less alert after periods of strenuous play The teacher is a second factor Whether he/she is a thoughtful listener, is open to diverse student responses, and is a person to be trusted with a full and personal response are considerations in how freely and actively children respond A third factor is the children themselves The age of participants and their level of self-control affect response patterns Very young children have more limited attention spans and are less able to handle abstract content

To work for active response is essential if schools are to overcome the passivity to words received aurally that many teachers have noticed in today's children Paul Witty (1967) reports studies indicating that elementary school pupils spend an average of 20 hours per week in televiewing with 15 hours per week for first graders and 25 hours per week for fifth graders Such a continual diet of televiewing has converted many elementary school children into passive receivers of external stimuli Television viewing, after all, is a simple receptive process Viewers take in visual and verbal stimuli but are not required to react, and in many instances they can listen with half an ear and a quarter of a mind Television, in effect, becomes background noise of which people are aware but to which they do not attend

Purpose-Filled Listening It is possible to make listening an active endeavor in elementary classrooms It is equally possible to make listening purpose filled One way to do so is to turn storytime

into an oral language time Literature is a basic, daily component in elementary language arts programs Clearly some encounters with stories and poems should be oral with children listening to the best of stories and nonfiction In the process, if literature sessions are structured with follow-up activities and discussion, children will build and refine specific listening skills They will learn to listen to follow story sequence, to interpret feelings of story characters, to judge rightness and wrongness of story acts, to distinguish fact from fancy, to identify words that are particularly powerful

All areas of the elementary curriculum offer purpose filled opportunities for developing listening skills as part of ongoing learning and living activity Writing, for instance, can be based on an oral language experience, children listen to identify story words that send a happy message and then use those words to create an identical mood in a parallel story they create In like manner, reading can develop out of listening, children independently read other episodes in books from which the teacher has already orally shared selected passages Further more, work with maps in social studies, graphs and measuring in mathematics, and investigations in science can have oral components with youngsters listening to directions they must actively follow To complete a map, graph, or investigation, youngsters must listen for specific detail, for a sequence of steps to follow, for key words during music youngsters can listen to the lyrics, attending to words that create a powerful mood and paint a clear picture, and during art they listen as the teacher describes the manner in which the paint is to be mixed and the brush is to be held Again the result is not only the development of content-related skills and understandings but also development of listening skills

Purpose-filled listening occurring as part of ongoing literature language, and subject-related activities is a completely natural component of learning and communicating Children listen to gain information they actually need to complete a task, to analyze material and locate words they will need later on, to remember a story they will share As Donald Landry (1969) points out, 'Because listening is inherent in many classroom activities, the teaching of listening merely capitalizes upon those experiences which are already a part of the school day and uses them to make living and learning even more effective' Listening is "one of the media through which other areas can be studied and learned" Through listening, children encounter new words from science and social studies, from mathematics and literature and they encounter a variety of sentence patterns These words and patterns may become the children's own to be used to express thoughts in speaking and writing

Purpose filled listening occurs too as part of the total communication process, with listening and speaking going hand in hand Basically there are two kinds of listening/speaking situations First is the conversational situation where an immediate give and take results in a cross-flow of ideas Face to face discussions between two individuals or among a group of people are typically conversational with first one person, then another assuming the talking role and with others functioning as 'not-now talking' persons Much of personal interaction is conversational, so the need for related listening/speaking skills

is great Presentational listening is somewhat different Here a major presenter or presenters maintain the primary speaking role with listeners serving as an audience that contributes nonverbal feedback and occasional verbal input Listening to stories being shared, TV and filmed material, lectures, and speeches is essentially of the audience variety

Classroom listening should reflect the ways listening naturally takes place in normal everyday living if children are to acquire skill in functioning both in conversational and presentational situations Andrew Wilkinson (1970) is an advocate of much classroom time spent in the basic conversational or discussion situation "in which two or three or half a-dozen are sitting around, and ideas get discussed and pushed around" He proposes "a large amount of splitting children up into groups and working in that way" Paul Burns and Leo Schell (1973) agree They see listening skills being developed as children talk "in functional situations in which other children have a functional need to listen," and advocate much oral reporting — as well as group discussion, storytelling, and other speaking opportunities" as means of building listening proficiency Through interaction in small conversation groups and on a one-to one basis, children will learn to vary their listening depending on the situation They will grow in interpersonal listening skills learning to respect the opinions of others, wait their turn, be polite, and respond in terms of what others have said

Through participation in presentational listening situations, children will learn to express physically their understanding or lack of it, to raise significant questions, to ask for clarification They will learn to take simple notes on material presented Since much college instruction is of the presentational variety, these skills are essential for the college bound

As the foregoing section implies, children and adults listen for a variety of diverse and interrelated purposes that fall into three categories gathering information (Informational Listening), analyzing and judging critically (Critical Listening), and appreciating (Appreciative Listening) Although distinct categories, the three often blend in real-life listening

Engaging Children in Informational Listening

Informational listening occurs as people understand, remember, and respond to the content of an oral communication They engage in informational listening when they —

- react and respond logically to details of a communication its content, sequence, organization, or specific words,
- reproduce or recall details from an oral communication they have received,
- summarize an oral communication,
- follow directions contained in an oral communication
- construct a set of visual or verbal notes based on an oral communication,
- take action based on facts contained in a communication

One procedure people use when listening for information is to organize mentally the key elements of what is heard. Listeners visualize the steps in a sequence, sort significant detail from that which is less significant, note key words that carry the communication forward. Helpful when listening for information is asking questions about ideas that are unclear. Helpful too is repeating either silently or orally what is heard. This people do, for instance, when given a set of motoring directions to follow, listeners ask for further detail or repeat the entire sequence back to an informer to make sure they have the directions clearly in mind. Sometimes people listening for information write down key parts. This is done when someone proffers a recipe for later use, listeners jot down quantities of each ingredient to be added and the order in which ingredients will be combined. By making notes during or after listening, people are recognizing the transiency of information heard.

To help children acquire informational listening skills, schools need to provide conversational and presentational experiences that require children to react and respond to detail, recall sequence, follow directions, and at the same time take notes and summarize. As Barbara Schwartz showed at the beginning of the chapter, creatively designed activities, focusing on specific listening skills and leading into further language activities, are possible even with primary grade children. In her lesson the washline became a story outline that helped children recall both sequence and detail.

Listening to React to Detail. As noted, listening to stories can sharpen children's perception of detail. A favorite storytelling/listening technique of many primary grade teachers is to encourage students to participate in the storytelling by contributing sounds, words, and/or actions. Listeners must attend carefully to the storylines so that they will be able to add their contribution upon hearing appropriate cue words. An easy beginning for this type of listening work is the sound story, one to which many sound effects can be added to make the sharing time more meaningful and purposeful.

Ms. Somer, a primary teacher, found that Marjorie Flack's *Ask Mr. Bear* is an ideal tale to tell as a sound story. In *Ask Mr. Bear* a little boy asks a succession of animals what he should give his mother for her birthday. Before sharing this story, Ms. Somer introduced each of the animal characters to her listeners, and they identified and tried out the sounds associated with each. Then she divided her class into sound groups, each becoming an animal mentioned in the story and making the appropriate sound whenever the animal name occurred during the storytelling. Many other talking-animal stories teachers enjoy sharing with young children can similarly be converted rather easily into sound participation stories, including perennial favorites such as *Henny Penny* (see reference list for Paul Galdone's illustrated version) and newer ones such as Arnold Lobel's *Frog and Toad Are Friends*.

Upper graders appreciate the pleasure of sound participation listening if the selection is carefully chosen. A group of sixth graders played with "Casey at the Bat" during World Series time. Their teacher distributed colorful, inflated balloons to two groups, the booers and the cheerers. As students listened to the teacher's reading, they specifically



Some teachers call sound participation stories arrow stories. They mount a large arrow on a stick, hold it up when children are to contribute a particular sound, and lower it to indicate a cessation of the sound.

listened to identify their contribution cue. Each time the umpire called a strike on Casey, the booers stamped, jeered, hissed, and waved their balloons. And each time "when appropriate" the cheerers roared their approval of Casey.

To some selections listeners can contribute words on cue. A perfect story for this is the old tale of *The Little Red Hen* (see reference list for the edition illustrated by William Holdsworth). Groups of children can become the dogs, cats, pigs, turkeys, and hens to contribute these words repeated during story-telling: "Not I," said the dog. "Not I," said the cat. "Not I," said the pig. "Not I," said the turkey. "Very well," said the little red hen. "I'll do it myself." And she did.

Student contribution to a story can be physical as well as verbal. A third grade teacher shared *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* with her class. In this Caldecott Award winner Sylvester's parents try to discover his whereabouts by asking several different groups, in each case the parents get no information. This teacher turned part of her listening group into animals, police, and so forth. At each point in the story where the parents make an inquiry, she paused and looked toward the students playing the appropriate role. Those students shook their heads and frowned in response.

These examples from classroom practice suggest that most stories can be told so that students participate in the telling and become moving, active listeners. To do so, they must listen intently for cues or details and then react quickly.

Listening to Recall and Respond to Detail. Children must go beyond the very elementary-level activity described above and listen to recall and respond logically to detail. Purpose-filled listening for detail occurs as children cooperatively pursue learning tasks, talk and listen informally together, attend to group presentations and material read aloud, participate in structured discussions and classroom games.

Pursuing Cooperative Work Tasks. The work task that several youngsters complete together is a natural setting for developing skill in detailed listening. Working together in small groups, children must listen closely to one another to make a verbal response that maintains the logical flow of ideas and ultimately to get the job done. Cooperative work tasks that require considerable give-and-take and careful listening to detail include:

- composing poems, stories, letters, written reports in pairs or small groups,
- deciding how to lay out a final draft of material written in teams,
- editing one another's writing on a face-to-face basis,
- deciding how to organize and present a group report to the class,
- preparing for group puppet shows, dramatizations, and pantomimes,
- figuring out how to orchestrate and lead choral speaking,
- figuring out answers together to mathematics problems and to end of chapter questions in social studies and science texts,
- planning cooperatively for classroom events, parties, trips, speakers,

- investigating a science problem laboratory style in pairs or teams
- constructing a classroom display

The work tasks that teacher and one or two students complete together also provide opportunity for growth in detailed listening skills. Teacher and students discussing samples of creative writing, preparing a bulletin board, planning for an assembly program or a back to school night—all these task-related jobs trigger talk and active listening for detail.

Conversing Informally Together Another very natural situation for building detailed listening skills is the informal talk group comprised of two or three youngsters. After a school holiday assembly or individual reading time, youngsters gather with conversation mates to talk about things done, enjoyed, or read. Faix (1975) suggests that in small groups children can also share descriptions of a favorite friend, an exciting school subject, a pleasurable outdoor activity, or a play item they can share descriptions of a hobby or a highly admired adult. After conversing together, youngsters form into larger groups to relay details communicated to them by their conversation mates. Through informal give and take, children learn to listen to the detail contributed by friends and to make their contributions relate to ideas already presented. Through small group interaction, children are simultaneously learning about how to get along with others in face-to-face discussion.

Informal and spontaneous conversations between two youngsters who meet in a classroom conversation nook to talk briefly about a matter of mutual concern hold a similar potential for growth in conversational listening skills. Because voices are kept low, a youngster must attend closely to be able to respond to the stated detail. Some teachers schedule time for informal conversations in which the topic is wide open, with participants deciding in pairs what they will discuss. Open discussions encourage growth in interpersonal skills in concert with listening and speaking skills.

Responding to Group Presentations and Material Shared Oral reporting in all the content areas can be structured, especially in upper grades, to facilitate recall of detail by listeners. The teacher proposes that a team of reporters preannounce the three or four topics to be explained in their oral presentation. Listeners divide into three or four groups, with each group taking responsibility for raising questions and recalling detail about one of the preannounced topics. After the reporting time, listeners orally review details on their topics while presenters listen to see if others have picked up essential points. The listeners ask questions about material presented and eventually summarize the content they recall.

In much the same manner, one can handle informational films, books, and magazine and newspaper clippings read aloud as part of ongoing class activity. For example, before sharing a book such as Irma Black's *Busy Water* with second graders, suggest that children sitting on one side of the room listen to find out where and how rivers start. Those in the middle should listen to find out how rivers get bigger, and those on the remaining side to find out how rivers end. All should listen to find out where the rain comes from. Or in introducing a film like Holling C. Holling's *Paddle to the Sea*, suggest to older students that they listen to find

out the route that the little boat followed to the sea. Afterwards trace the route on the map. Or before sharing a news clipping on strip mining, with sixth graders for instance, urge them to listen to identify problems associated with strip mining and how the proposed law explained in the article attempts to deal with those problems. Suggestions of this kind help young listeners focus their attention on significant detail.

In addition, science, social studies, and current events discussions structured around a listening-recording guide can lead to increased skill in recalling detail. A discussion guide is prepared that lists three or four questions with space beneath for recording information relevant to each question. As students in small groups orally share information and reactions gathered through preliminary reading, they jot down facts and ideas in the appropriate space on the guide. Later they use their jottings to summarize for the class key points considered during group discussion time. Similar oral noting guides can be prepared for distribution by class reporting teams. These guides can be just a listing of topics to be presented. Listeners jot down key points made under each topic for use in follow-up small group or one-to-one discussions.

Listening to Recall Sequences One kind of detail that a listener may be asked to recall is a sequence of events found within either story or informational content.

Story Sequences Since many stories for children have a step-by-step sequence that is relatively clear, literary selections provide content for purpose-filled and active listening. A timeline is one way of systematizing sequential events encountered in stories. This is simply a line on

Listening together to a story



which one plots major story happenings in order of occurrence. A story such as Marie Hall Ets' *Play with Me* lends itself to this kind of creative interpretation in the lower grades. The child in *Play with Me* meets a succession of animals, each of which he frightens away. Finally, as the child sits quietly, one by one the animals return to play with him and one comes to nuzzle his cheek. Listeners can sketch each animal as mentioned in the story on a timeline or write the animals' names there. Later they refer to their timeline notes as they retell the story to someone in the class not in the original listening group. Stories that are easy to translate into timelines are those in which one event follows the next in regular, almost stepwise fashion, stories like Mirra Ginsburg's *How the Sun Was Brought Back to the Sky*, Beatrice de Regniers' *May I Bring a Friend?*, and Marie Hall Ets' *In the Forest*.

Middle-grade children to whom the teacher on successive days reads a portion of a longer story find timeline construction equally challenging. Older groups develop a wall-sized story timeline that extends across one side of the classroom. Each day, the students use the line to recall events that have transpired in previous listening sessions and mount additional happening cards along the line for important events encountered in the story that day. As noted in chapter 3, episodic books are particularly good for daily oral sharing in the middle grades.

In one classroom a teacher turned to the flannelboard to encourage primary grade children to listen for story sequence. His flannelboard pieces were simply different colored geometric shapes that symbolically represented story locations and characters. For sharing John Burningham's delightful story *Mr. Gumpy's Outing*, the teacher prepared a tall, yellow rectangle for Mr. Gumpy, two smaller yellow rectangles to represent the two children, a brown circle for the cow, a purple square for the pig, and so on. As he related how all these animals joined Mr. Gumpy aboard his boat for an outing, on the flannelboard he systematically filled a boat-shaped piece with the geometric shapes. And when he got to the point in the story where the boat capsized throwing all into the water, he displayed on the flannelboard a large blue shape on which he had pasted another set of rectangles, circles, squares to represent the story characters. Having shared *Mr. Gumpy's Outing*, he distributed the pieces to members of the story-listening group who, using their pieces, attempted to reconstruct the story. Each, with a little prompting from the teacher, retold the part associated with the piece that he/she held. Later the teacher placed the flannelboard and the pieces in the storytelling center. Children in pairs could go to the center to retell the story to one another using the geometric pieces as memory clues. They could also go to the creative writing center to compose original stories and to the art center to cut out shapes to use in sharing their stories with the class.

Older children find it challenging to retell a story heard only once. Many traditional stories are available on tape, stories like 'Nail Soup,' 'One Good Deed Deserves Another,' 'Who Was Tricked?' and 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf.' Before playing a story tape, the teacher announces that listeners will attempt to repeat the story after only one listening with each in turn contributing a line or two. It is fun to draw numbers from a hat to determine the order in which youngsters will contribute to the story. In this way chance determines who is called upon to retell simpler and more difficult parts of the story.

relating symbols to things

Using puppets to make
story listening
pleasurable



Science and Social Science Sequences Whenever content in social and natural science incorporates a series of interrelated events, listening to recall sequence becomes feasible. Informational material to be shared orally is introduced with the suggestion "Let's listen to find out the sequence in which events take (or took) place." This introduction is most appropriate with books and even films that describe natural science cycles such as the egg-tadpole-frog-egg cycle, the egg-caterpillar-cocoon-moth-egg cycle, the water cycle, the rock cycle. It is appropriate too with material that tells about a series of historical events. While or after listening, students can record events on a straight timeline or a circular one in the case of natural science cycles. Or after listening children can review events in a sequence by placing appropriately labeled naming cards in order on the flannelboard or by clipping them to the classroom storyline. At times the teacher can prepare naming cards in advance, students order them based on information gleaned from a film viewed or an informational book heard. At other times youngsters divide into work groups. These write out their own labeling cards, put the cards in order, and then compare their orderings with those of other groups. The latter approach is a way of handling biographical content met in sound filmstrips. Having viewed a strip that describes the life of an historical figure like Ben Franklin, Marie Curie, Teddy Roosevelt, upper graders in groups write out cards noting key events in the famous person's life, they order their cards according to the chronological sequence identified in the filmstrip.

Listening to Follow Directions. People often must go beyond recall to perform a task based on information acquired aurally. The normal, everyday tasks of classroom living and learning provide repeated opportunities for developing children's ability to follow directions they

have heard Daily a teacher tells children how to line up in a special order how to position fold cut mark off paper to use for special purposes how to follow particular sequences of events in completing personalized learning tasks At these times he/she must speak clearly making use of precise transitional words *first then finally when* Children can repeat segments of the directions to insure that they know exactly what it is they are to do and to practice a technique that skillful listeners sometimes use when faced with a complex set of oral directions — to wit repeating them in shortened form

Tasks associated with all areas of study in elementary schools provide purpose filled reasons for listening to directions A few extended examples taken from subject areas are given below to clarify the wide and varied contexts in which skill in following directions can be developed naturally

Mapping in Social Studies Valerie Burns was introducing her fourth graders to basic elements of map interpretation using a key a grid system the north south east west directional symbols and a scale So students would learn to interpret these map elements Ms Burns prepared the Halloween map shown on the following page It was October and children's anticipation level was high The fourth graders each received a duplicated copy Ms Burns displayed an enlarged classroom sized version To introduce basic map reading principles the teacher orally directed Everyone point to the haunted house on the map Find the symbol for haunted house in the key so you will know where to point Valerie announced the direction only once Each child responded by pointing to the spot on his/her map One child provided self checking assistance by pointing out the location on the large map As soon as children had responded by pointing Ms Burns announced further pointing out directions Point to the intersection of the A grid line with the 3 grid line Point to the intersection of the B grid line with the 2 grid line Point out the jack o lantern on the map Then she announced more difficult directions

- Directions related to interpretation of scale Using the scale what is the distance between the jack o lantern and the skeleton? Using the scale what is the distance between the coffin and the jack o lantern? Using the scale what is the distance between the witch and the haunted house?
- Directions related to interpretation of north south east and west Start at the witch and walk 20 feet north 40 feet west 40 feet south and 20 feet west Where are you? Can you find a shorter way? If you walk through the graveyard from the haunted house to the jack o lantern in which direction will you have walked?
- Directions related to interpretation of the grid system What are the grid points for the haunted house? What are the grid points for the spook? What are the grid points for the jack o lantern?
- Directions related to interpretation of the legend and the grid system Use the legend to find out what is on A 1 What is on the grid points B 2?

To each direction delivered orally the children responded by jotting an answer on paper As soon as each child had done so a volunteer

he/she had derived it. Since both directions and answers were given orally, these fourth graders were as much involved in developing their listening skills as they were in increasing skill in map interpretation.

A similar blending of objectives in listening and mapping is achieved from a "build-a-city" experience. Young people will listen intently as teacher or tape gives directions for placement of rivers, streets, rail lines, public buildings, and shopping centers on a growing map. Directions can go something like these, which were devised by one social studies teacher to allow practice of concepts related to north, northeast, northwest, south, southeast, and southwest.

Draw Main Street cutting directly across the center of the map from east to west. Three major roads cut across Main Street, extending from due north to due south. These roads are First Street, which is the most eastward of the roads, Second Street, which is the middle one, and Third Street, which is the most westward. On the northeast corner of the intersection of Main and Second is the Memorial Elementary School. On the southeast corner of the intersection of Third and Main is the Randolph Public Library.

Once young people have built a city following a set of teacher directions, they can create original directions for city building based on their understanding of what kinds of activities and services are found within cities. Students share their directions orally with listeners, who must respond to the directions, or they tape the series for use in a listening/mapping center. In most instances, students will have to write out their directions before sharing or taping to insure that directions are clear and result in a city that is functional.

Measuring and Graphing in Mathematics The teacher of one second grade was introducing students to the ruler. He began by giving a simple counting direction: "Count the number of spaces marked off on the ruler." Children counted first in unison and then separately, concluding that there were 30 spaces on their rulers. The teacher told the second graders that each line on the ruler marked off an equal distance called a *centimeter*. Together they pointed to the one centimeter mark, then the five centimeter mark, then the nine centimeter mark, as the teacher called out numbers. The teacher next divided the class into work-checking pairs. As he continued to call out simple directions like, "Point out the 22 centimeter mark," the children pointed and checked with their work assistant to see if both were pointing to the same spot. During a follow-up session, children drew lines with their rulers, making each a centimeter length announced by the teacher. In this oral work with numbers, children had to listen carefully to know where to point.

A teacher working with an older group announced more complicated directions to students learning to measure in millimeters and centimeters. Her oral directions went like this: "Measure the shortest side of your desk surface. Measure the thickness of your mathematics book. Measure the distance between two cracks in the chalkboard. Measure the length and width of a floor tile." Young people in pairs carried out the oral directions by measuring with their rulers; they

wrote their measurements on cards and at a signal held up their cards to check theirs against those of other participants

A teacher working with even more mature youngsters used graphing as a means of refining children's listening skills. These youngsters had become familiar with the names of the axes (x and y). Using these names, the teacher orally announced points to be plotted on the graph. When the students had plotted a number of points, they connected the points to discover a picture hidden there. Again youngsters were developing listening skill in a purpose-filled context.

Today with the appearance of a multitude of concrete, manipulative devices—rods, cubes, pegs, and so forth—through which to develop mathematical understanding, the opportunity to develop listening skills through mathematics instruction is burgeoning. In developing a concept, the teacher announces directions for setting up cubes, organizing rods, lining up pegs—directions children carry out on the spot. Moving among the students, he/she can quickly check to see whether participants have comprehended the concept and followed the oral directions.

Investigating in Science Children involved in science investigations simultaneously are involved in carrying out a sequence of steps. At times a teacher may orally present the steps to be followed so as to provide meaningful instruction in listening. For example, as youngsters experiment with magnets, one can announce

First test any ten articles in the room to see which are attracted to your magnet. In your reporting notebook, make two lists, one list of objects attracted to the magnet and a second list of objects that are not. When you have completed this investigation proceed to a second one. Now, locate the bottle of iron filings and pour out a handful on a piece of paper. Test a small portion to see if it is attracted to the magnet. Then take a small portion of iron filings and mix it up with an equal amount of sand. You will find the sand on the left counter. Again test this mixture with a magnet. Record the results of this second investigation systematically in your notebook.

The teacher presents such directions clearly and slowly, holding up magnets at appropriate times in the direction series and pointing to the location of iron filings and sand. Finishing the explanation, he/she asks a few children to repeat aloud the series while a scribe records key words on the board. By the time children divide into groups to pursue the investigation, they will have reviewed orally the directions more than once and in the process will have had basic instruction in how to listen to a relatively complex set of directions. They will have seen the value of repeating a complicated sequence of steps and noting down key words. With younger primary children, of course, sequences of oral directions should be much shorter and less involved.

Working out more open, nonteacher-directed investigations youngsters also must listen for directions, this time delivered by teammates. Given, for example, a pile of 36 soda straws and a pile of pins, a team discovers basic constructional principles by building the tallest structure they can devise. A team discovering together proffers suggestions to one another: "Try attaching three straws at the bottom" or "Make

the straws overlap, or 'Put your finger on this joint. They ask for clarification 'What do you mean?' or Show me or I don't get it. Any number of figuring it out investigations contained within some of the newer science programs require considerable informational listening and direction giving of this type.

More Activities for Informational Listening The day by day tasks of the classroom, encounters with literature and the subject areas of the curriculum and highly motivating gamelike activities are natural settings for developing children's ability to listen and respond to the informational content of oral messages. Here are some brief ideas for involving children in informational listening.

- 1 **Introduce Your Partner** On the first day of school, pair off the students. Student pairs chat for a short time, each telling the other key facts about himself/herself: name, address, birthday, hobbies, favorite subjects, favorite kind of movie or book. Then schedule an Introduce-Your-Partner time with each youngster introducing his/her friend to the class and relating some interesting facts gleaned through listening.
- 2 **Introduce the Speaker** Whenever a speaker is scheduled, one youngster becomes host, meeting the speaker at the door and inquiring about key points to include in introducing the speaker to the class. The host uses information gathered orally to introduce the speaker. You may want to supply the host with a noting card to jot down information during the preliminary interview with the speaker.
- 3 **Sum Up the Speaker** After a speaker has departed, young people can orally share facts they have heard that they consider to be most exciting.
- 4 **Carry the Message** In schools where young people are allowed to leave the classroom to carry messages to other classes or to school personnel, make some of the messages oral ones. Tell the student the short communication and ask him/her to ask for listen to and remember the return communication.
- 5 **Take the Message Home** In primary grades at the end of the afternoon, encourage children to summarize some of the things they have done during the day. Ask several listeners to repeat the points mentioned. Suggest that upon arrival home, they all tell a parent or sibling what they have done in school. This is especially important in communities where parents tend to ask children, 'What did you do today in school?'
- 6 **Story Outlines** Read a story from a trade or basal reading book to a literature listening group. Ask younger children to draw three pictures: the first telling what happened in the beginning of the story, the second detailing what happened in the middle, and the third showing what happened at the end. Older children can write their own versions of the story using their pictures as outlines.
- 7 **Ordering a Story** Before storytelling, prepare a series of cards, each one outlining a key story event. After listening, children go to a follow-up listening station to place the story cards in correct sequence. Children check their own work by comparing card order to the order indicated on a self-checking guide.

- 8 *Walk the Map* A number of supply houses market floor-sized maps of the U S Call out directions such as "Walk from Kentucky to Minnesota Walk from Minnesota to Wyoming " Children gain both skill in listening to follow directions and knowledge of the placement of states in their country as they literally walk across the states
- 9 *I Heard This!* Encourage children to describe programs viewed on TV, movies seen, and even conversations in which they have participated Descriptions can be written summaries of key points and happenings, post summaries on an I Heard This! bulletin board

Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Think about a topic within a content area that you will be teaching Design a learning session in which you develop an informational listening skill as you teach the subject area If you are currently teaching try out your planned session in the classroom with a small group of children
- Design a listening guide that you could use as part of an ongoing literature experience in primary grades Design a more sophisticated guide through which you could develop systematic note taking skills in upper grades If possible, try out the guides in an actual classroom situation

Engaging Children In Critical-Analytical Listening

The purpose of informational listening is to remember and respond to the factual content of an oral communication In contrast, critical listening occurs as people go beyond facts to take apart the communication, to analyze and think about the words ideas, and nonverbal components People listen critically when they—

- identify the main idea of a communication and important subordinate ideas,
- identify relationships among ideas,
- generalize from the ideas,
- give other examples of ideas discussed,
- distinguish between fact and fantasy, between fact and opinion,
- identify a speaker's feelings and point of view,
- identify key words that communicate feelings, point of view and main ideas,
- go beyond words to identify the gestures, intonations and facial expressions that a speaker uses to communicate feelings point of view, and main ideas

As this inventory indicates, critical listening is first of all an analytical process in which people perceive the big ideas and feelings expressed

the words used to express those feelings and ideas, and the nonverbal and vocal expressions used to communicate. Obviously ability to analyze ideas, feelings, words, and nonverbal vocal expressions is to some extent dependent on ability to grasp the facts and understand word meanings. In this respect there is overlap between critical analytical and informational listening.

Before looking at ways to teach critical analytical listening, review for a moment the characteristics of words, intonation, and nonverbal expressions discussed earlier in chapter 2. S. I. Hayakawa in *Language in Thought and Action* (1964) distinguishes among the emotional meanings communicated through word choice that determine the impact a speaker has upon listeners. He calls words like *louse* and *slob* "snarls," for they carry a particularly negative connotation. More positive words like *sweetheart* and *home*, he calls "purrs." Nonverbal and vocal expressions carry similar negative or positive feelings. This means that when children in schools are engaged in critical analytical listening, teachers must involve them not only in the ideas being expressed but with the way those meanings are being expressed verbally, vocally, and nonverbally.

Listening for Words Primary grade children can gain understanding of the emotional impact of words by conducting a word search in which they identify 'happy' and 'sad' words. To motivate the search, the teacher suggests that children in two person teams cut two large clown faces from a piece of light colored construction paper. One face is to be happy, the other, sad. Instead of drawing in the facial features with regular lines, however, children print 'happy meaning' words in the shape of eyes, ears, nose, mouth, wrinkles, eyebrows, and a hat. More happy words are printed around the perimeter of the face. Children draw in the features of the sad clown using sad words in the same fashion.

Once children have identified words that have happy and unhappy connotations, they look for very pleasant, very sad, very angry, very bored, and/or very excited words in stories such as Bernard Waber's *Rich Cat, Poor Cat*, Russell Hoban's *Herman the Loser*, or the more recent *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst. Excited, bored, angry words located in this way can be penciled on other clown faces to which are added words found in dictionary and thesaurus, which carry a similar emotional meaning.

Upper grade students are able to handle more completely the notion of positive and negative connotation. To work with the concept, they identify purrs and snarls in filmed material. Student viewers can afterwards think about those narration words that sent them a positive or negative message. Particularly good for this purpose are films on controversial issues, such as population, environmental problems, war, politics. Students can also focus on words used in classroom interaction. Over a two- or three-day period, young people may look for words that the teacher uses to indicate pleasure or displeasure. Or they may look for snarls and purrs that crop up in class discussion. A few youngsters can be assigned each day to serve as Word Investigators whose task is to record examples from class discussion. A few minutes at the end of the day are reserved for consideration of words identified by the Investigators.

Identifying Feelings. Listening to poetry, boys and girls in elementary school can attempt to pinpoint the feeling that the poet was trying to convey through words. Some of the haunting pieces by Langston Hughes are good for oral sharing, listeners can reflect on the feelings conveyed by contrasting pieces, such as

Dreams

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken winged bird
That cannot fly

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow

and

Dream Variation

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
Dark like me —
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done
Rest at pale evening
A tall, slim tree
Night coming tenderly
Black like me

Old favorites are still valuable for listening. Walter de la Mare's "The Listeners", John Masfield's "Sea Fever", Robert Browning's "Pippa Passes", Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening", William Blake's "The Lamb" and "The Tyger", William Wordsworth's "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold"

Younger children can sense feelings articulated in poetry, too. Many of the traditional nursery rhymes are filled with feeling. Happiness sings in "Ride a Cock Horse", Fright pervades in "Little Miss Muffet". These are feelings that even a nursery school child can sense.

Contemporary poems are available for feeling-listening in primary grades. A superb collection is Mary O'Neill's *Hailstones and Halibut Bones*, which contains a "feeling poem" about each of the colors. A delight for listening is "What Is Blue?" in which Ms. O'Neill associates a myriad of things like herons, sapphires, flax, blooms, cold, dawns with the color blue. This poem is a stimulating stepping stone

for student thinking and expression. Listeners associate freely, thinking of things they relate to blueness, they add these feeling thoughts to Ms. O'Neill's poem. Later in groups they brainstorm feeling thoughts about yellow and green, black and gold. Ideas written down by groups can become lines in individual and class poems to be put together on another occasion.

Because feelings are oftentimes expressed more clearly in story than they are in poem, listening to analyze feelings of story characters is a productive experience, especially for the younger elementary child. Barbara Woods has devised a simple, analytical listening guide that may stimulate children to analyze feelings of characters met in stories. Across the top of a duplicated sheet, this teacher draws a row of smiling faces, across the bottom, a row of frowning ones. Next under each "picture face" she draws a line. As children listen to stories, they decide which characters are generally happy, which unhappy. Students write the names of the characters under the appropriate listening guide faces. Since changes do occur in a story and sometimes unhappy characters become happy, students may have to write the name of a particular character beneath both a happy and an unhappy face, drawing an arrow from one to the other to indicate the direction of change. (See figure, p. 122 for a similar listening guide.)

Analyzing Ideas. There are many ways to involve children in the ideas they hear. One is to provide students with a tape recorded passage followed by several questions that ask the listener to identify the main idea. Tapes of this type are available commercially, but the content of the commercial tapes will generally bear no relationship to classroom topics being studied at a particular point in the curriculum. The teacher can produce more relevant listening tapes on social and natural science topics being studied by taping a selection from text, book or reader, reading questions like, "What does this paragraph tell?" and, "What is the best title for this paragraph?" and pausing to allow time for listeners to jot down their answers. Finally the teacher tapes the answers so that students score their own papers. For ease in self-correction, questions of the multiple choice variety permit students working in a self-contained listening center to complete the task on their own. Then too, if a number of selections are provided, listeners can go to the center each day to complete an exercise and keep on an individual graph a running record of their progress.

Analytical listening may be structured as a group endeavor. The teacher reads the class a passage such as one from the Gates Peardon *Reading Exercises* series. Although this material was originally designed to develop reading skills, the selections work equally well for listening. For example, a selection from the Gates Peardon booklet *What Is This Story About?* helps the listener/reader identify the main idea.

If you like to swim, you might like to try another sport—skin diving. It is fun, especially in Florida and California where the water is warm. All you need to wear is your own swim suit, a face mask, and a pair of rubber flippers on your feet.

The best kind of face mask is one made of rubber and glass. A band around the head keeps the mask on tight. The glass covers your eyes, nose and mouth. The mask may also have a snorkel, which is a short breathing tube. The end of the snorkel stays out of the water. This allows you to breathe fresh air while you are watching for interesting things at the bottom of the water. With rubber flippers on your feet you can swim faster and longer and do it with very little effort. Try skin diving and discover the under water world!

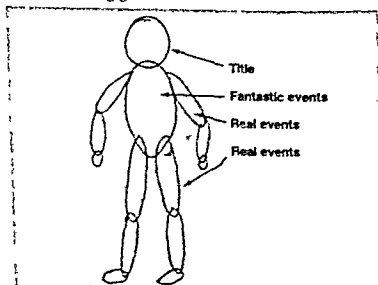
- 1 What does this story tell?
 - a What to wear if you want to try skin diving
 - b How to take pictures with an underwater camera
 - c Why a snorkel is better than rubber flippers
- 2 Choose the best title for this story
 - a Be a Champion Swimmer
 - b Underwater Fun
 - c A New Use for Rubber

Exercises such as these convert very easily into listening exercises. One can even extend their usefulness by composing several questions that ask students to identify subordinate ideas.

- 3 The rubber flippers worn for skin diving are to
 - a Keep your feet warm while swimming
 - b Let you swim deep beneath the water
 - c Let you swim faster and longer
- 4 A snorkel is used for
 - a Breathing
 - b Watching interesting things at the bottom of the water
 - c Keeping the ears dry

Again, if a teacher reads aloud a selection such as this each day, listeners can plot daily scores on a graph and chart their own progress toward listening goals.

Tell Tale Listening
Guide



SOURCE: Emma Kaden, et al. *Changes for
Children* (Pacific Palisades, California:
Good and Beautiful, 1973). p. 104. Copyright © 1973
by Good and Beautiful.

Being able to differentiate between fact and fancy in stories is a related listening goal. A variation of a creative activity devised by Sandra Kaplan and her associates (1973 p. 104) helps children analyze the fantastic quality of ideas met in story contexts. As middle graders listen to a tall tale, they record on a tall person shape events in the tale that are both fantastic and possible. Fantastic happenings are labeled on the body of the figure for they are at the heart of a tall tale. Possible happenings are placed on arms and legs. The title goes on the head. Sandra Kaplan suggests that listeners cut out head, arms, legs, and body from patterns and that they connect the construction paper pieces with paper fasteners. When all the labels are added to a tall tale person, the result is a creative outline of key story elements.

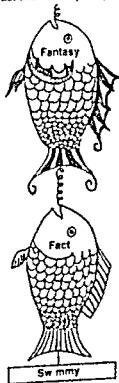
The Kaplan idea can be modified so that it is functional for stories other than tall tales. After listening to a story, youngsters cut two similarly shaped pieces from differently colored construction paper. The shape should relate in some way to story action, setting, character, or mood. For example, a fish shape if the story is Leo Lionni's *Swimmy*, a donut if the story is that famous episode from Robert McCloskey's *Homer Price*. On one piece of a story pair, listeners print *Make Believe* or *Fantasy* and record story events that could not happen in real life. On the other, listeners print *Real* or *Fact* and record events that could actually happen. Stringing the two pieces of a story outline together with colored yarn and suspending them from a light fixture. Stories on tape can be placed in an analytical listening center where students work independently on distinguishing fact from fancy. At the center are construction paper, folders, yarn, story tapes, and tape recorder. Youngsters go to the center to listen and then to construct Fact and Fantasy Shapes for stories heard.

The same technique can be applied to the analysis of statements to distinguish fact from opinion — a task much more difficult than distinguishing fact from fantasy. Preparatory to listening, students cut out listening guides — thought balloons, similar in shape to those appearing above the heads of comic strip characters. They label some shapes *Facts*, others *Opinions*. Upper grade students use their guides as they view classroom films on controversial issues. They refer to their listening guide jottings as they later discuss in small groups whether the statements presented were more likely fact or opinion.

Before individually attempting an assignment so difficult, even sharp sixth and seventh grade students require considerable introductory work with facts and opinions. They start by discussing pairs of statements like these:

- 1 Oranges are grown in California and Florida. (*fact*)
- 2 Coke tastes better than orange juice. (*opinion*)
- 1 The temperature reading today at noon was 26° C. (*fact*)
- 2 That water is too cold for swimming. (*opinion*)

Students consider in depth the key characteristics of fact and opinion that a statement's truth or falsity can be proved by pointing to specific instances that different opinions can be stated on the same question that opinions cannot be proved definitively that opinions contain ele-



ments of "should," "must," "best," "too much," "too many," and so forth

Having categorized statements, more gifted students in groups can devise original samples. After mounting two large pieces of oaktag — one labeled *fact*, the other *opinion* — on a bulletin board, students record examples on both. Each example should be discussed, for devising is not an easy task. Later they probe: Are all the statements listed appropriately? In some cases, students may debate a statement's factualness and wish to record it on both sheets. In doing so, they are recognizing that the line between fact and opinion is not always clearly drawn.

To apply growing understanding of fact/opinion to statements met in everyday conversation, several Listening Detectives can listen for examples of fact and opinion that occur in classroom discussion, recording examples on thought balloon listening guides. Detectives may locate "fraudulent facts," opinions stated by a speaker as if they were true. As students begin to recognize fraudulent facts they add a third thought balloon to their listening guides to simplify recording.

Students beginning to distinguish between fact and fantasy and between fact and opinion in oral communications should apply their growing skill to an analysis of materials read. As Sara W. Lundsteen (1964) has indicated, a substantial positive relationship exists between critical listening and critical reading; critical listening skills reinforce critical reading skills and vice versa. Obviously there are differences between the two. In the case of listening, the receiver is under greater time pressure and the person delivering the message has a greater personal impact on the receiver. The clear relationship between the two areas, however, does suggest that schools should be teaching higher level listening skills in conjunction with higher level reading skills in order to provide mutual reinforcement.

Analyzing Nonverbal and Vocal Expressions. In identifying the differences between critical listening and critical reading, Dr. Lundsteen (1964) has proposed that in listening the "person-context" colors the reaction of the listener. By person-context, she means the nonverbal and vocal components of the communication: the speaker's facial expressions, eye focus, gestures, stance, gross body motions, tone of voice, inflections, speed of speaking, pauses, loudness and pitch, as well as changes in any of these. Such components can engender strong feelings in the listener, even causing him/her to tune out the message altogether.

Since the person-context has considerable effect on how one receives a message, the good listener should be able to identify how the speaker to whom he/she is attending is using nonverbal and vocal expressions. This is especially true since the person context is something that some conversationalists and speakers manipulate purposefully.

Picture reading is one of the easiest introductions to interpretations of meanings sent nonverbally. Mrs. Jaye, a kindergarten teacher, snipped from magazines a series of people pictures showing persons in different interactive situations. She mounted each picture on

See also Sara Lundsteen
Listening Is Important
Reading (Unpublished
National Council of
Teachers of English
1971)

construction paper and drew empty comic strip type balloons from each mouth. In a talk session her children brainstormed what the picture characters were thinking. She guided with questions like: Do the picture people like one another? How do we know? How do the picture people feel? Happy? Angry? Fearful? Tired? How do we know? The children produced responses both amazingly perceptive and delightfully original. One picture depicted a woman dressed in an apron and holding a potato masher. The children concluded that the woman was angry: the expression on her face and the way she held the masher told them that. Asked to fill in the thought balloon drawn above her head, the kindergartners agreed that she was thinking: My husband is not home yet and this food will go bad. I'm mad. I'm going to eat all the food and not leave any for him. The teacher followed up the picture study with a brief talk time: youngsters identified some of the clues listeners rely on in real life to decide what people are really thinking and feeling.

In contrast a sixth grade teacher carried his class into a more sophisticated study of impression management as employed on tv commercials and political telecasts. Students watched commercials on the school's tv set and studied the manner in which performers manipulate vocal and nonverbal language. They asked themselves: What messages does the performer send through —

- gesture? through the way he/she stands, sits, positions the head, positions the arms, walks?
- facial expressions? through the eye focus?
- the speed of speech and the way he/she pauses?
- overall tone of voice: pitch and loudness of speech?

The sixth graders had a great time with some of the commercials in which business people advertised their own products. Next they analyzed video taped speeches of local politicians to see if they could detect instances of impression management. Then they analyzed messages by people they knew: parents, siblings, teachers, and other school workers such as the bus driver. They concocted observation guides to record aspects of body and vocal language. They searched for clues that indicated a person was employing nonverbal devices as a facade to create a particular impression. Through their study these young people became more aware of the impact of vocal and nonverbal messages and became more effective listeners.

More Activities for Critical Analytical Listening Here are a few brief ideas for doing more with critical analytical listening.

- 1 *The Main Idea* At times introduce a subject of study in social and natural sciences by reading a striking paragraph from an informational book or by showing a motivational film. In these cases ask children to listen to find out the main idea.
- 2 *Are They the Same?* As children think about a community or national issue, share with them two articles, reports, editorials, or letters to the editor. Ask children: Are both articles saying the same thing? If they differ, what is the difference?
- 3 *What Words?* To students studying an issue, read related letters to

- the editor that are loaded with pejorative language Ask children to listen to identify the snarl words
- 4 *The Moral Way* During literature study, orally study fables with a listening group but make the children figure out the moral before it is read Because fables are short, reading time is also short, because fables are narrow in focus, figuring out the moral is a relatively easy task Or set the activity up as a learning station Just record some fables on tape, again deleting the moral Place the tape in your listening center where you display numbers of morals Listeners select the one that best expresses the message contained within a fable Incidentally, when children share original fables, they can delete the final moral in like manner, leaving classmates to figure it out
 - 5 *Adjective Play* When children are learning about adjectives as part of language study, ask them to identify the adjectives that best describe the main character in stories they are listening to Children must give reasons why the chosen adjective fits the character Again this activity can be organized as a learning station
 - 6 *Sing-Along* As children listen to a song and sing along as part of their encounters with music, ask them to identify the words they believe really communicate the song's message Some of the recently written country music hits that carry a strong message, as well as some older folk songs, are useful here as you blend music and language listening

- Make an audio tape that you will use as part of a unit in social studies and to which children will listen to gain skill in identifying the main idea Set the tape up in an individual listening station where youngsters go independently Be sure to select a topic appropriate for the age level with which you are or will be working Ask children to react to your tape Did they enjoy it? find it boring? appreciate the quality of your voice?
- To read to a group of young children, select a story that provides effective material for distinguishing fact from fancy Share the story orally with a group and follow up with discussion and activity in which children analyze the factual and fantastic elements
- Work on your own ability to distinguish fact from opinion As you listen at times think Is that a statement of fact? of opinion?
- Write out a series of statements you believe to be facts and a second series you believe to be opinions Share them with a group of fellow teachers or teachers to be and discuss the reasons for categorizing the statements as you did

Engaging Children In Critical-Judgmental Listening

Critical listening is an analytical process, it can also be a judgmental one, with listeners making decisions about the rightness-wrongness good

ness/badness, harmfulness/harmlessness of the facts, the ideas, and the way both facts and ideas have been presented. People engage in critical-judgmental listening when they —

- ask for more information before making a judgment and then suspend judgment until all the facts are examined,
- evaluate story characters and their actions in terms of good/bad, honest/dishonest, considerate/inconsiderate, and so forth
- determine the accuracy of statements heard,
- weigh the quality of a story, poem, report, or any other communication to which they are listening, such as a tv show, a movie, a tape recording, or a sound filmstrip
- support evaluations with specific facts,
- attach a label like "propaganda" to some forms of communication and pinpoint statements of propaganda as harmless or harmful

Sara Lundsteen (1964) contends that in the past schools have not given sufficient emphasis to the teaching of listening in which the formulation of judgments is an integral part, she warns that if this lack of emphasis continues language arts programs will be seriously failing in their responsibility to prepare students to function fully. People young and old are assimilators of a multitude of ideas emitted by the mass media, particularly by the television tube. Are people selective and critical in choosing programs they will receive? Are they selective and critical of facts and ideas heard? Do they know the bases on which they are making decisions? Or are they non discriminating, noncritical, and essentially gullible? Here are some ways to build judgmental listening into the elementary curriculum, so that young people will become discriminating consumers of what they hear

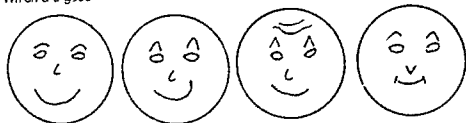


See Sara Lundsteen,
"Procedures for Teaching
and Listening" in
Contributions in Reading
No. 34 (Lexington Mass
Ginn 1964)

Judging Story Character and Story Actions Barbara Woods listening guide for analyzing happy and unhappy story characters described on pp. 115 can be converted into a guide for judging good and evil characters in stories, particularly fairy stories where the line between the two is rather clearly drawn. The format of the guide remains basically the same: two rows of faces, one with pleasant expressions, the other with evil grins, a line beneath each face, one on which the story title is written, another for indicating the character trait being considered. Youngsters who have listened to a story print the names of essentially good characters under the pleasant faces and those of essentially evil ones beneath the grinning faces. For example, young children judging characters in *Hansel and Gretel* might list Hansel, Gretel, and the father across the top row and the witch and the stepmother along the bottom. Supporting their judgments with specifics, children print on the actual faces examples of evil or good things done by the characters.

Children can go beyond single-faceted judgments to make a second judgmental sheet for a story, this time considering whether characters are shrewd or gullible. Shrewd ones now are labeled across the top row, gullible ones, across the bottom. By doing this, evaluators become aware that good characters sometimes behave gullibly while evil characters may behave shrewdly. Students in intermediate grades may be able to identify other contrasting qualities to plot in similar fashion: quick versus 'slow', 'wise' versus foolish. Again comparisons can be

Which are good?



Name _____

Which are evil?



SOURCE: Reprinted with permission of B & W Books

made among the different charts devised for the same story. Are there story characters who combine shrewdness, evilness, and quickness? Are there characters who combine goodness, slowness, and foolishness? And older evaluators may support the labels they attach to characters by printing on the faces examples of character actions.

To build a bridge from listening into reading, a teacher can set up a learning station where children read stories and then judge characters. For this purpose, he/she collects a number of story books in a box, on one side of which is tacked a large-sized manila envelope, in this pouch are copies of the listening/reading guide. On the reverse side of the box is tacked a second large envelope. The teacher places the box on the floor in a quiet corner. Students working at the center read stories, complete for each one or more guides focusing on a different pair of traits, and then place their completed guides in the second pouch.

Gifted students appreciate a variation of this listening/reading activity. Instead of beginning with characters and applying a general label to them, evaluators first sequentially plot story actions on a timeline. On a straight line drawn across their papers, listeners or readers write a short summary phrase that tells what happened first in the story, they follow that phrase with one that tells what happened next and repeat the process until all major happenings have been plotted. Now evaluators must judge the rightness/wrongness of story actions. Having made that decision, they place a predetermined symbol (such as a big ✱) next to acts they consider morally right and a different symbol (such as a big •) next to acts they consider morally wrong (or in children's terms, naughty). If a listening or reading group is comprised

- 6 Is fast music,
- 7 Are detailed pictures in the background

A student recorder transfers to a stencil items listed on the group chart and duplicates it. The items become a checklist to be taken home and considered as children evaluate specific cartoons. On the school tv set, young viewers tune in a morning cartoon. Grouped in small work teams, they follow the viewing with analysis of key elements: naming hero and villain, describing exaggerated features, retelling parts of the action and the silly things that happened, describing music and pictures. After analyzing, students make an overall evaluation of the cartoon.

Older viewers devise similar checklists for evaluating more sophisticated tv shows: comedy series, variety shows, the news, documentaries, even tv movies. In each instance, evaluators select checklist items against which a performance is judged, realizing that the included items influence the final judgment. On a quest for criteria, young people may phrase items as responses to the leading question: What qualities must a show possess to be rated good? Working with comedy series, evaluators may respond with items, such as: 1 some characters we like, 2 funny lines, 3 happenings that could occur, 4 costumes and set that are realistic, 5 believable acting. Older students may be able to distinguish among items that relate to the general content of the show and those that relate to the way content is performed. In so doing viewers may develop dual faceted judgments, rating a program weak in content but strong in performance.

Judging the Accuracy of Statements Heard. The commercial is a familiar feature of television and radio programming, often occupying as much as one-third of actual broadcasting time. Because commercials occupy a high percentage of listener viewing time and may distort facts to create a particular impression, they are especially significant material for elementary students to study in building judgmental listening skills.

Writers of commercials distort facts in a number of different ways. First, writers make "glittering generalities," claims so general they could not possibly be true — statements such as 'Product X outperformed the leading competitor on absolutely every test given'. Second, writers imply that everyone is turning to the product, especially people "in the know." The 'bandwagon effect,' as it is called, plays on the fact that many people do not want to be different or left out. Third, writers include a favorable endorsement of the product by a person who may be a celebrity and may not use the product at all. More recently, writers are including a testimonial by a company spokesperson, the owner, the owner's spouse, or the chairperson of the company board, who extols the merits of the product and speaks of the company's dedication and concern for the consumer. Fourth, writers "stack the deck," citing only the good points, never the weak ones. When this occurs, a commercial literally contains half-truths. Finally, ad writers attempt to associate the product to be sold with things and places carrying a positive connotation. In the past, cigarette advertisements have shown smokers amid sparkling clear brooks, green grass, trees, fresh air — the absolute antithesis of the dirty air created by smokers.



Upper grade elementary students will find it challenging to listen for examples of each of these selling devices. They may start with newspaper and magazine clippings, talking about the way facts have been distorted and words have been selected to mislead. Working from an outline such as the one provided below, students begin to categorize statements as glittering generalities, bandwagon effect, testimonial, deck stacking, or positive associations. A worthwhile assignment in judgmental listening for fifth and sixth graders is to listen to tv commercials to locate an example or two of statements that fit each category, relating listening to critical reading, students locate similar statements in magazines and newspapers.



An article which aids in identifying instances of hard sell is D. Tutolo "Teaching Critical Listening: Elementary English 52 (November-December 1975) 1108-12

Devices For Manipulating Facts In Advertising

Purpose to discover examples of fact manipulation in commercials and advertisements

Task Listen to commercials on tv and study ads in magazines. Find examples of statements that fit each of the following categories

Type	Definition	Examples
1 glittering generality	a statement so general that it could not possibly be true	
2 bandwagon effect	a statement suggesting that everyone is turning to the product	
3 testimonial	a statement by a celebrity or company representative attesting to the merits of the product	
4 deck stacking	a statement giving only the good points and ignoring obvious weak ones	
5 positive association	an attempt to associate the product with pleasurable things	

More Activities for Judgmental Listening

- 1 Tv People** Student viewers name and describe a favorite tv personality, telling why they like him/her. Conversely they name and describe a disliked personality, telling the reason for their dislike. Children can judge story characters in the same way and share their judgments in small discussion groups. An interesting follow up when evaluations of tv actors have first been written is to delete the performer's name from the evaluative statements. Writers read their evaluations to classmates, who must listen to guess the name of the actor in question.
- 2 Doublespeak** Students look for examples of "doublespeak" in telecasts and broadcasts. Some examples of 'doublespeak' are calling a shovel a "combat replacement evacuator," calling slums "inner cities," calling the bombing of a country "air support." The National Council of Teachers of English considers doublespeak dangerous, for language is being used purposefully to hide important facts.



Good sources of listening activities
David Russell *Listening Aids Through the Grades* (New York: T.C. Press 1959)
Guy Wagner *Listening Games: Building Instructional Games* (New York: Macmillan 1970)

- 3 *Putting on a Positive Light* Students look for examples of euphemistic language substituting for words that may carry a negative connotation words with more pleasant associations Examples are calling a road a *parkway*, a factory district an *industrial park*, a lavatory a *powder room* Mount a large piece of oaktag on a bulletin board so that students can list examples as they uncover them in conversation
- 4 *Clarifying Values* Some of the techniques of values clarification developed by Sidney Simon, Louis Rath, and Edwin Fenton are particularly helpful in critical listening that involves a judgment Chapter 6 amplifies these techniques and provides specific examples

Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Search out a book in which a leading character commits a "naughty" act Orally share the book with children and follow up with small group discussion in which they propose reasons why they consider the act naughty At this point you might want to reread that section of chapter 3 (pp 68–69) that describes Weiger's study on children's reactions to naughty acts they encounter in story
- Study the story *Pinnocchio* Devise a sequence of questions you could use with upper graders to help them formulate judgments about story acts, consider the reasons behind the acts, and think about the nature of punishment If you have access to a group of children, try your sequence after orally sharing the story

Engaging Children in Appreciative Listening

Pleasure is the key feature of appreciative listening People listen appreciatively when they attend to and take pleasure in the

- content of stories, poems, dramatizations, and music they hear,
- sounds of language — its rhythm, repetitions, rhymes, alliterations,
- moods expressed and mental pictures conjured up through striking language usage,
- natural sounds and rhythms that can be expressed ultimately in words

Clearly appreciative listening has shades of informational and analytical listening Often the very reason people enjoy a story is that they like the way ideas build sequentially one upon the next Often too pleasure comes from information extracted from words and sounds Because appreciative listening blends naturally into other forms of listening, in engaging children in appreciative listening we engage them in other forms as well In actual teaching it would be impossible, as

Tillie turned around and looked behind. And do you know what? There was Chilliie right behind her all the time, riding on a magic broomstick and already for Halloween haunting.



Children of all ages are generally held spellbound as they listen to a drawing story and see the related picture simultaneously take form on a chalkboard or easel. Part way through, the teller will recognize the light of understanding that comes into student eyes as one by one they perceive what the final drawing will be. Children will enjoy concocting similar stories to share with listening classmates. To trigger story invention, teachers can supply a few shapes, two examples of which appear in the margin. Children build stories to accompany the shapes.

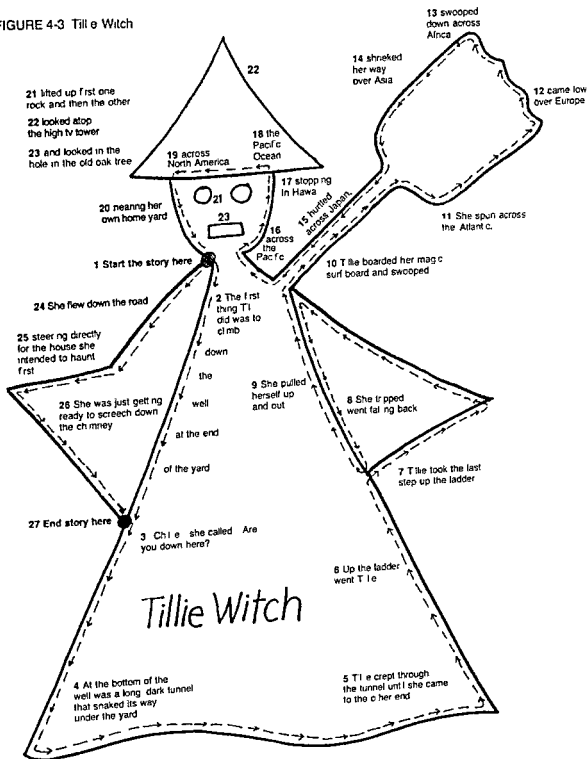
Once youngsters have enjoyed a drawing story, they will enjoy it even more if they can participate in a second telling. Many drawing stories convert rather easily into sound-participation stories. For example, a teacher can convert the adventure of Tillie Witch by designating half the class to be Tillie, the other half to be Chillie. Listeners determine what sound to associate with each witch; perhaps "Cccchhhhhlllllll" for Chillie and "Tttttlllllll" for Tillie. Every time either of the story characters is named in the telling, listeners utter the predetermined sound. Incidentally, some middle grade teachers have found that this activity makes a particularly pleasurable Halloween party adventure combining language experience with party time.

Another mood-setting technique is reading a story or poem to musical accompaniment. A musical composition should be selected that blends in rhythm, pace, and mood with the story or poem to be shared. As the teacher reads, the composition plays softly as background music. With lower grade children, for example, the reading of a tale like Miyoko Matsutani's *The Fisherman under the Sea*, which is actually the Japanese equivalent of the Rip Van Winkle story, can be combined with a recording of Japanese music. With upper graders a potpourri of lines from Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* stimulates appreciative listening when read to the accompanying sounds of "Ebb Tide." In some instances, tales have a musical selection that directly parallels the story, Dukas' "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf," Tchaikovsky's "Cinderella" and "Sleeping Beauty," Rossini's "William Tell" complement beautifully the same stories told with words and can be background music during story sharing. The result is an adventure in sound and story that turns classroom into fantasyland.

Enjoying the Sounds of Language. One group of middle graders who had listened intently to the drawing story about Tillie Witch and who had added sounds to the telling turned to the invention of other words that witches make. In preparation they listened to "The Sounds of a Haunted House," a Walt Disney recording filled with eerie sounds and noises. They brainstormed a mass of real words to describe sounds they had heard and went on to dream up original "witchy" sounds. They concocted make-believe words like *whhhuuissssss, whoooooommmmmmm sshhhuuuuuuuu wwhhhummmmmmm, vvvooooommmmmmm, hhhwwwoooooo, bbbllloooooo* and identified

Good books to check
Ruth Sawyer *The Way of
Storytelling* (New York
Viking 1945)
Ruth Tootz *Storytelling*
(Englewood Cliffs N.J.
Prentice Hall 1958)

FIGURE 4-3 Till e Witch



SOURCE: Don Freeman *Tillie Witch* (New York: Viking Press 1969)

Tales from West of the Urals are superb for building older children's appreciation of image and mood in stories. Each story in these collections is short, making possible a daily appreciative listening session. Each story too is filled with striking word pictures. Fifth graders listening to "The Tailor and the Giant" in the Gardner collection have been asked to think how the author made them actually "see the story." Fifth graders have identified sentences like "The dogs came thundering into the forest, knocking down trees with their terrible shoulders, and their eyes were like lightning and their shaggy coats rattled and snapped with electric sparks in the cold wintry air" as being especially effective. They could see the dogs. This same group of youngsters listening to "The Last Piece of Light" from the Gardner collection were asked, "How did the author make you almost feel the cold in the forest?" They responded by identifying as "cold words" powerful phrases like "One couldn't walk six feet without snapping a snake that had turned to an icicle there on the path," and "The bears went into hibernation, though it was summer." Later listening to Ginsburg's recounting of Unerbek, they identified words that showed them that Unerbek was a good man, and listening to "Syrevarda," they thought about how the author had used words to make them feel sad, identifying *wept*, *moaned*, and *tears* as sad ones.

These students went on to write striking word pictures into their original folktales. Some wrote "hot stories which make the reader sweat"; some wrote "colorful stories filled with reds, purples, and oranges which a reader can picture, and some wrote "sad stories which make a reader cry."

Primary children can work toward appreciation of the mood and the pictures that an author paints with words. Choice of story will make a difference in how young children will react to this kind of listening task. A first grade teacher chose Paul Galdone's *The Horse, the Fox, and the Lion* to introduce children to mood in story, and she began by focusing on the actual pictures. Having shared the words and pictures, she asked, "How do the pictures make you feel? Then she followed with "What is there in the pictures that makes you feel sad?" The children spoke about the sad look in the horse's eyes and the way he held his head down. From there they listened again to the words, looking for those that created the same mood and painted a clear picture of the horse. When the teacher read the lines, "The horse, feeling very sad, wandered away till he came to a forest where he might find shelter under the trees in bad weather," the children interrupted. Those words, they said, were as good as the pictures in telling that the horse was unhappy. So were the words that followed "A fox met him and said, 'Friend, why do you hang your head so low and look so forlorn?'" Later as a class, they orally composed a story with a similar mood created with words: a story about a sad billy goat.

A fine material for appreciative listening in upper grades is the modern ballad. Listening to a recording of John Denver hits like "Take Me Home, Country Road," and "Leaving on a Jet Plane," young people can express with watercolor and brush or pencil some of the mental images painted so vividly with words. Listening to a ballad like "Starwood in Aspen," young people can identify particularly expres-

sive phrases like "It's a long time to hang in the sky," and "springtime is roaming around slowly," through which Denver communicates his feeling for his "sweet Rocky Mountain paradise." Here is the ideal time to suggest: What words make us see exactly what John Denver is describing? What feeling is he expressing? How does he make us share his feelings?

Enjoying the Sounds Around Us. A fourth kind of appreciative listening comes into play as people attend to and enjoy the natural sounds and rhythms around them. Students, developing heightened awareness of sounds, should stop to listen a moment or two to the sounds around them. An excellent setting to initiate "sound listening" is when young people have ventured out on a nature walk, perhaps to draw and talk about things encountered. Students close their eyes and remain perfectly still, attending to the sounds around them. They may hear the wind blowing through trees, leaves rustling, their own hearts beating, a plane flying overhead, a dog barking in the distance. When listeners have attended to the sounds for at least several minutes, they join in small groups to list the sounds they have heard, groups later compare their observational listings. A possible next step is to categorize sounds perceived: pleasant/irritating, loud/soft, steady/intermittent, even/uneven. Each group works with a different dichotomy so that resulting charts differ as well.

These dichotomies, especially the pleasant/irritating one, are productive when applied in other contexts. Individually or in groups young people list kitchen noises — bacon sizzling, refrigerator humming, water running, and so forth — and then categorize them. Similarly students listen for street noises, pond noises, seashore noises depending of course, on where they live. In recording noises, observers list descriptive phrases (such as *waves striking the shore*), sound words (such as *crashing, buzzing, and whistling*), and extended sound words (such as *bbzzzz, boooooom, zoooooom*). Wall-sized sheets can be used for compiling and displaying phrases and words. Working from these charts, young people write other sound poems that combine descriptive phrases, sound words, and extended sound words in a creative design, composers should vary the number of lines, the sequence of different kinds of lines, and the form of first and last lines. An easy introduction to this kind of listening-writing work is to have each child add to a class piece a line descriptive of sounds heard together at a particular location, for example

In the Woods

Listen to birds singing in the trees
wind rustling the leaves
mosquitoes buzzing in my ears
trees creaking in the wind,
steady breathing —
A hum of nature's noise

After children have listed all the different lines they can think of, they order the items so that the lines read smoothly, then they add a short, sum-up last line

Elementary students will enjoy tape recording sounds around them, students off on an excursion to city street, field, forest, park, zoo, aquarium, factory, or airport find it easy to record sounds they encounter on the way. Later, back in the classroom, listeners identify recorded sounds, translate the sounds into onomatopoeic words, and create sound poems. For example, words to describe car sounds are *roar, rumble, rattle, zoom*, those to describe train sounds are *whistle, chug, swish*, and those to describe bird sounds are *chatter, peep, squawk*. These words become poems when combined with others and purposefully ordered.

A similar approach is for elementary students to record original tapes of sounds produced for the occasion, sounds like a penny dropping, an egg beater beating, sandpaper rubbing, a hammer pounding, a typewriter writing, ice being crushed, a window closing, water dripping, paper being crushed. Later other students listen to the tape, try to identify the sounds recorded, and attach descriptive words to the sounds.

A fine little book to trigger creative thinking about sounds is Eve Merriam's *Out Loud*. A teacher can read a piece or two to older elementary students who have already played with blending sounds and words. Listeners will enjoy hearing the sounds of the world translated into the sounds of words and be eager to try writing pieces of their own in Ms. Merriam's style. Her "At the Ocean," in which listeners hear the "rrrrrrroarrrrr" of the green beast that is the ocean and her "Gab," which is filled with "Yaps," "Yawps," "Palavers" and "Prattles," are particularly striking.

Older students will enjoy Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing," and become aware of the sounds of America at work.

I Hear America Singing

I hear America singing the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves for work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat the deckhand
singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he
stands,
The wood cutter's song the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at
noon intermission or at sundown
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs

Walt Whitman spoke of the sounds of America singing that he heard at the end of the 1800s, students can listen to the sounds of America singing that are heard today. To do this, they must identify the workers of the 1900s, and in their pieces they will probably have to change Whitman's *he* and *his* to include *she* and *her* as well.

A natural next step for students who have enjoyed listening to poetry in which ear-tingling words describe familiar sounds is to turn attention to music in which notes describe the noises, sounds, and rhythms of the world. Young people can listen to Ferde Grofé's

'Grand Canyon Suite' to hear the storm approach, strike, and then subside, to Camille Saint-Saëns' "Dance Macabre" to hear the evil beings rant and roar, to Leroy Anderson's "Typewriter Song" and "Sandpaper Ballet." They can listen too to the music of the modern composers — John Cage, Henry Cowell, and Edgard Varese — who have incorporated the sounds of an active world into their music. A new recording distributed by Folkways Records and entitled *Sounds of New Music* is a must for every library collection. In it the listener hears the musical interpretation of a busy factory, a trolley car, a piano that has been 'fixed.' Listeners start by identifying the sounds heard in the music and attempt to visualize what is occurring by sketching their impressions. If sketches are done in black ink on white paper, musical interpreters can apply a colored wash across the surface of the sketch, selecting a color for the wash that is in harmony with the mood of the music. Students can add word impressions to their visualizations, words that come to mind as one listens to the piece, the result is a collage of words, picture, and color that communicates the feeling of the music.

Activities of the type just discussed are an important component of a language arts program. Through the activities students not only build general listening skills but also increase their vocabulary as they play with words to express sounds of the world and of music. Words brainstormed in reaction to things heard are also the "stuff" of student writing. Words recorded on charts, lists, and collages become an integral aspect of classroom space, available for use when students begin to consign thoughts to paper. Although rather obviously the sounds of nature are not part of human language and communication, appreciation of the sounds around can lead to heightened appreciation of words as listeners encounter these same sounds as words in pieces that poets like Eve Merriam have written and they themselves compose.

More Activities for Appreciative Listening

- 1 *Noisy Words* Provide a list of objects or animals that are noise makers: jet planes, pneumatic drills, motorcycles, buses, trucks, electric dishwashers, electric saws, electric drills, clocks, typewriters, gulls, monkeys, ducks. Students write sound words that they associate with each object, words such as *roar*, *rattle*, *clank* that they may associate with a dishwasher. They add descriptive adjectives to words originally listed: *steady roar*, *ear-shattering rattle*, *loud clank*.
- 2 *More Noisy Words* Conduct a sound word search in the thesaurus for synonyms of words like *whine*, *purr*, *squawk*, *holler*, *whistle*. Students will be amazed at the number of words they will find.
- 3 *Guess It!* Place sound-producing objects in individual, sealed paper bags — objects like marbles, pennies, pebbles, macaronies, nails, wood chips. Students shake the mystery bags and guess from the sound what kind of object is in each bag.
- 4 *Noisy or Quiet Books* To develop awareness of sounds, share noisy or quiet books with children. *The Loudest Noise in the World*, *The Seashore Noisy Book*, *Noisy Nancy Norris*, *Noisy Nancy and Nick*.

Encourage children to listen for quiet or noisy words. For example, listeners to Benjamin Elkin's *The Loudest Noise in the World* will discover hubbub and hullabaloo.

- 5 **Listening for Rhythm and Rhyme** Listening to a piece of poetry, students identify pairs of rhyming words. In poems containing series of couplets, younger children can listen to each couplet from which the final rhyming word has been eliminated, to see if they can figure out what the word must be. Students too can listen for the rhythm of poetry, with the assistance of rhythm band instruments — bells, drums, sticks, castanets. As teacher or a student reads a poem with a clear rhythm, students maintain the beat with the instruments. Use the same kind of rhythm-keeping activity to accompany musical selections.

Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Search out a story for sharing. Read and study it. Practice telling it in a creative way. Then share it with a group.
- Try telling a drawing story to a group of listeners. Carl Withers' *The Tale of a Black Cat* is an easy tale for the beginning story teller.

Making Listening Happen in Classrooms: A Summary Thought or Two

Donald Landry (1969) in an article in *Elementary English* pointed to the neglect of listening occurring in elementary classrooms. He contended that there was a serious lack of programs developing listening skills and identified four traditions playing a role in this history of neglect: 1 assuming that listening will develop naturally, that the child grows in listening abilities even as he/she physically grows up, 2 frowning on listening as a curriculum area because schools assume that important learnings can be precisely measured and there are few objective measures of listening, 3 equating listening with hearing, which are actually two different processes, and 4 stressing reading and writing at the expense of the other language arts.

To overcome this history of neglect and to make listening happen in classrooms should be goals of elementary schools today. But as with all goals that appear to add to the school curriculum, a first question arises: How do teachers fit more into an already crowded curriculum? In the case of listening, this problem is not so great as it at first appears. As this chapter has explained, listening is a skills/appreciation area that relates to all areas being taught. It is a natural part of social and natural science learning. In the context of the sciences, one must analyze and judge facts and ideas delivered orally, get information from material heard, note ideas on paper. In like vein, listening activities correlate with music and art: the product of a listening time can be a sketch, finger painting, a collage, while music is an ideal

accompaniment to some listening experiences. Furthermore, listening is a natural stepping stone into the other language arts. By developing listening skills and appreciations in these contexts, teachers are not really adding to the work of the school day, they are combining instruction in listening with existing instruction in the content areas. Children who have listened to poem or story are often eager to write in a similar pattern. Children who have used listening guides as they attend to stories can use a duplicated guide as an outline for their own writing.

When one considers how naturally listening fits into an elementary curriculum, it is difficult to understand the traditional neglect of listening, especially since it occupies so significant a part of our waking hours and since effective listening is a major determinant of continued language growth. Through listening, people acquire new words and sentence patterns and learn how to manipulate words and patterns. It is equally difficult to understand this neglect given the fact that listening activities tend to be enjoyable for child and teacher alike. Many listening activities are game-like, involve children physically, and require interaction. When listening is conceived as an active, not a passive process, it is body and mind consuming, asking participants both to attend and to react. Listening too is a creative activity, children must at times visualize and imagine, words become pictures, words and pictures become ideas, and ideas snowball. The job of language arts teachers is to make this kind of listening happen in classrooms with the ultimate goal being that children apply listening skills outside, beyond classroom doors.

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Oral sharing:
stories, poems,
humor, facts,
ideas—far from
dry

"A hem!" said the Mouse with an important air
"Are you all ready? This is the driest thing I know. Silence all round, if you please!
William the Conqueror, whose cause was favoured by the pope, was soon submitted
to by the English, who wanted leaders and had been of late much accustomed to
usurpation and conquest. Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria —"
'Ugh!' said the Lory, with a shiver
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Everyone was ready. Tables and chairs had been pushed to the perimeter of the room, opening a wide area in the center. By the tables, fifth graders sat together in little theater companies. Near each company were scenery and props for sharing stories, fun, and information with others in ways far removed from the "dry" style of the Mouse in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Visiting with H. C. Andersen. At a signal from their teacher, one fifth grader distributed the program for the class's informal Visit with Hans Christian Andersen. The program had been handlettered by that student on a duplicating master; each student received a copy that announced:

A Visit with Hans Christian Andersen

The Life of Hans Christian Andersen a presentation by the Andersen Reporters — Tom, Kev, Jake, and Marcia
"The Steadfast Tin Soldier": a puppet show by the Danish Puppeteers — Ruth, Karen, Moose, Gil, Mary, and Bob
"The Ugly Duckling": a dramatization by the Playing Five — Martin, Max, Janey, Jill, and Brenda
"The Little Mermaid": a shadow play by the Four Keys — Nate, Herb, Kathie, and Sallie
"The Emperor's New Clothes": a filmstrip-telling by the Script Writers — Fran, Phyllis, Frank, and Joe
Talking with Andersen an interview with the Star Interviewers — Angela, Jose, and Mane — and with Hans Christian Andersen, played by Milt
Some Andersen Riddles all participants
Today's Announcer — Rose

→
gaining in ability to share
informational content with
the aid of visual timelines,
timelines, and sketches

The Andersen Reporters opened the Visit. Tom displayed and explained a timeline he had sketched that indicated key events in the life of Hans Christian Andersen; Kev pointed out locations on a map of Denmark and indicated the significance of each location in Andersen's life; Jake explained a chart listing the main fairy tales written by Andersen and suggested relationships between Andersen's life and

some of the stories such as 'The Ugly Duckling', and Marcia shared some drawings of Andersen himself that she had sketched from pictures in reference books, explaining the significance of each one

Then Rose, the master of ceremonies for the afternoon Visit, introduced the Danish Puppeteers who took a bow before beginning. The Puppeteers told the story of "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," manipulating a simple set of puppets they had made by taping paper heads to the bowl portion of large mixing spoons. They converted the table around which they had been clustered into a puppet stage by simply kneeling down behind the table and holding up the appropriate spoon puppets at key moments. Because the Puppeteers were sitting adjacent to the first team of reporters and performed from the edge of the room where they had been clustered, there was an easy transition between presentations.

The next three groups were similarly seated in program order around the perimeter of the room. Each in turn presented an Andersen story using the area in which they were seated as an informal stage. In the case of the Playing Five, who had selected to present 'The Ugly Duckling' as a dramatization, a tape that the group had previously made told the story, the players pantomimed it using facial and body expressions to show ugliness, unhappiness, dejection. Because the Little Mermaid had come from the sea, the Four Keys had one of their group read their original shortened version of the story as the three others manipulated stick puppets from behind a lighted sheet they had hung down in front of a desk. The reader sat crosslegged upon the table, the puppeteers sat on each side, introducing the puppets behind the lighted curtain as called for by the storyline. The Script Writers projected a colored filmstrip of 'The Emperor's New Clothes'. They had written a script to accompany the strip, as each frame was projected, they took turns sharing lines with the class.

The Star Interviewers had developed a short series of questions to ask an "Andersen-come-alive-in-the-twentieth century," questions like, 'Mr Andersen what do you think of television today?' Mr Andersen — Milt, that is — had garbed himself as he felt Hans would have dressed today. The Interviewers took turns directing questions to Hans much in the style of a "Meet the Press" telecast.

After each group had presented, Rose called for Andersen Riddles. The fifth graders had been writing riddles for weeks, and during the last week they had been focusing their attention on Andersen and his stories. Several children offered ridiculous riddles for others to decipher. Riddle: What did the mermaid say to the merman? Answer: Speak up, man, and stop mumbling! Riddle: Why did Andersen's mother name him Hans? Answer: Because his hands were as big as his feet. As was the class custom, Rose closed the Visit with Andersen by thanking everyone and by applauding, players, reporters, interviewers, and teacher joined in the applause. The Visit had lasted just an hour.

Getting Ready to Share Preparation for the Visit had been taking place for about two weeks as part of a social science study of Scandinavia. Youngsters had been investigating the forms of government, lan-



developing vocal expressiveness by sharing a story with the aid of creative puppetry



developing skill in using creative techniques to communicate a story expressing through pantomime, puppetry and pictures



gaining ability to present informational content in interesting fashion



growing in ability to create and present humorous content using pause, gesture and facial expression to build humor

guage relationships, and land/sea relationships so important in the Scandinavian countries, as part of their study, they were also investigating the Scandinavian literary and musical heritage. It was in this context that their teacher had introduced them to Hans Christian Andersen as a writer of fairy tales by sharing with them a film version of "The Gallant Little Tailor." The teacher had provided the class with a suggested listing of projects from which fifth graders, grouped into little theater companies, could select one to pursue during the coming weeks.

Projects for Little Theater Companies

- Dramatization of an incident in the life of Hans Christian Andersen
- Report on key events in the life of Andersen
- Interview with Andersen-come-alive-in-the-twentieth-century: How do you, Mr. Andersen, view the world today?
- Interview with Andersen: How do you, Mr. Andersen, view your own stories?
- Dramatization of an Andersen story using any interesting method of telling the story: puppet, pantomime, tape, filmstrip, flannel-board, mini-play, monolog, dialog, pictures. Find storybooks on reading table.
- Writing and dramatization of an original fairy tale modeled after one of Andersen's.

Companies had worked together during several periods set aside for the purpose and during periods when the teacher was active with small reading groups. To prevent duplication of effort, when each company had determined the project it would complete, it listed its choice on the board, since no two companies could select an identical project, a cross-section of activities resulted — activities including some story, some fact, some ideas — and some fun. The result was a Visit that merited final applause, in contrast to the interrupting "Ugh" delivered by the Lory upon hearing the deadly dry recital by the Mouse in Carroll's *Alice*.

→
Learning to work together
and communicate in
project groups

Sharing Stories

In elementary school, young people should acquire the ability to share thoughts orally in clear and interesting fashion. Telling stories is an ideal activity for developing this skill as well as the ability to handle the language with facility. First, stories have a straight-forward sequence so that they are an easy introduction to oral sequencing and pacing of ideas. Second, stories have an inherent appeal to children; youngsters love to hear stories read to them and can easily develop interest in sharing similar stories. Third, good literature is an integral part of elementary school programs; young people should be making contact continuously with stories through group listening and personalized reading activities. It is a relatively simple process to integrate oral expression into the listening and reading experiences, and simultaneously children who are sharing are learning a bit more about

books Fourth, stories for children generally contain much action In sharing action-filled stories, young people must learn to vary voice, to express meanings through face, body, and eyes, to use props where appropriate, to select the most expressive words These learnings are what oral sharing in the elementary school is all about

Research evidence supports the importance of oral activity, especially as follow-up to stories heard In a study by Strickland (1973), youngsters in an experimental group were exposed to a literature-based oral language program They enjoyed a daily oral story, which was followed by a period of storytelling, puppetry, creative dramatics, role playing, choral speaking and/or discussion Children in a control group listened to stories but did not participate in the oral language activities Strickland found that both groups showed increases in language skill, but children involved in active oral follow ups made significantly greater increases than those in the other group

Dorothy Cohen's work with seven-year olds in Harlem shows similar benefits derived from oral activity based on contact with books Children in Cohen's experimental groups met books daily for twenty minutes as their teachers shared stories orally with them The results were striking Participants in this program made significant gains in vocabulary and reading comprehension

Organizing for Sharing The Strickland and Cohen studies not only provide data supporting oral language experiences in the curriculum, they also suggest a framework for organizing classroom oral activity in primary grades Short periods of spontaneous oral expression can be structured in connection with stories that students listen to and enjoy together Stories become the substance of oral expression that may take the form of impromptu dramatizations, storytellings, or pantomimes

On other occasions periods can be set aside for sharing stories read, written, or composed orally Sometimes, as in the learning episode described at the start of this chapter, all members of the class contribute individually or in companies to a class story 'visit,' 'festival,' or 'extravaganza' that focuses on stories from a particular country, by one author, on one topic, or in one form, for example, fables, myths, tall tales, fairy tales More often only a few students contribute to a briefer story-sharing time Those who wish to share sign up indicating story title, their medium of communication (puppet, pictures, filmstrip), their name, and their 'little theater company' or 'stage' name To get things started, one teacher assembles a rather large collection of books borrowed from libraries or purchased for classroom reading, in each she slips a card Students who have read a book sign its card When several signatures appear, she forms those students into a little theater company to share the book with others Some books in the collection are wordless Students who have problems with reading can select these to translate into verbal stories to be shared orally, each child in the little theater company 'reading' a portion of the book to the class

At times young people enjoy sharing stories they themselves have written Especially in lower grades youngsters who have written short



Other titles for an afternoon sharing time
A Tall Tale Happening
"A Fable Fantasy"
Folk Tales Done by
McDermott
Adventures in
Wonderland
An Afternoon in Japan
"Around the World with
Story and Humor"



A reference to assist with spontaneous creative expression is John Steig's *Spontaneous Drama: A Language Art* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill, 1973).



References to assist with story sharing: Dewey, Chambers, *Storytelling and Creative Drama* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. Brown, 1970); Dorothy Hennings, *Smiles, Nods and Pauses* (New York: Citation Press, 1974); Ramon R. Ross, *Storyteller* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill, 1972); Ruth Tootz, *Storytelling* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1959).

pieces wish to read them aloud to others in the class immediately upon completing the writing. Reading is followed by brief conversation about the story with listeners telling what action or words in the story they liked. At other times youngsters who have written stories prefer to prepare them for dramatic telling. Rather than reading what they have written, youngsters convert their story into a playlet or pantomime to share with classmates in appealing fashion.

A feature common to this kind of sharing is relative informality. Although sharing may be dramatic, the dramatization is not a magnificent production with elaborate props and scenery, nor do children practice extensively, memorizing lines through endless repetition. During sharing, emphasis is on *enjoying* together. The only audience is classmates and teacher, contributions are not graded, and children, therefore, feel no pressure to produce perfectly executed performances. Upper graders generally add to the fun by "hamming it up" — a positive addition, for relaxed players enjoy performing. In this respect, they are learning to present orally to others without the nervous jitters so common among older people.

In this kind of sharing environment, moreover, the interaction that occurs during preparatory periods is just as important as the actual sharing. During preparatory periods children work together making innumerable decisions about story and staging. In so doing, they plan ahead, take responsibility individually for preparing materials, and adjust to differences in interest, determination, and ability within the group. To get their work done, they converse informally with one another in voices toned down so that others in the room are not disturbed.

There are numerous media through which players can share stories with others. They include pictures, puppets, objects, pantomime, and dramatization with words and actions. By working with these, players develop skill in communicating messages that are far from "dry."

Sharing Through Pictures, Storylines, Storyboxes, Storyrolls, Story Transparencies. Flat pictures add impact to story sharing. Several children who have written or read a story can render different key scenes in picture form. These can be hung on a storyline sequentially as the children share the story with the class. Or if only two or three children share the story, they can mount key story scenes they have reproduced on each of the six faces of a good-sized box. As they share the story, they hold the storybox in hand to display appropriate pictures at key story points. Children who do not enjoy drawing can snip related pictures from magazines to mount on their storyboxes or on construction paper to be hung on the storyline during sharing.

The storyroll is a related device for sharing. Individually or in groups, children draw or paint scenes from a story on a long roll of paper, shelf paper works nicely, but regular construction paper taped together into a roll will suffice. Children attach the short ends of their completed storyrolls to dowels or cardboard tubes, slip them into circles cut into a viewing box, and rotate them to pull the storyroll through the box so that the pictures are visible through a large rectangle.

gle cut into one side of the box. As students display the pictures sequentially, they relate the story happenings. In some cases, such viewing boxes are called "homemade TVs." A variation of this technique is to mount pictures on a window shade, which is pulled down to reveal pictures as a story unwinds. Of course, instead of showing storyrolls by displaying them on a homemade TV or by unwinding a window shade, children can project their pictures with an opaque projector, sharers literally roll their storyrolls across the stage of an opaque projector as they relate exciting happenings.

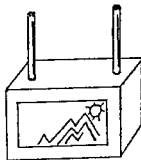
If there are facilities for making transparencies, young children can use them for sharing picture stories heard in small groups. Each child in a listening group selects a picture from the storybook. With the aid of a thermofax machine, the teacher makes a transparency from the selected pictures, with each child then coloring his/her selection with wax crayon. Later, in order of story sequence, each child places the transparency on the "stage" of the overhead projector to tell about that part of the story. Incidentally, children can make their own transparencies by placing a sheet of transparent acetate directly upon the chosen picture. Using wax crayons, the child traces the outline of the chosen picture and later colors it for projecting during class story sharing time.

An older student can produce an original, single transparency based on an exciting incident in a book read and enjoyed. Projecting the transparency, the young person tells about the incident, not giving away the outcome, but relating the exciting build up. This sharing format is essentially a book sale with a speaker enticing listeners to read the whole story.

When filmstrip versions of a story are available, the filmstrip — without the audio tape that so often accompanies it today — can be used as a medium for sharing by young people who have read the original book version. A small group follows up a reading or listening experience with a viewing of the silent strip. They now must use their memory of story happenings to devise their own version which they share with others while showing the strip.

One obvious advantage in encouraging students to display pictures as they tell a story is that they are learning the importance of supplementing words with some visual expression of the message, and they are gaining skill in presenting with the aid of visuals. In many presentational situations — not just in storytelling — the visual heightens the impact of words. A second advantage is that many times the visuals become the outline for presenting, providing a mental reminder of the order of thoughts to be presented. Third, in presenting stories or ideas to others, some people feel more comfortable if they have some visuals to help them communicate. Obviously, the visuals can contribute clarity to the presentation, but there is more to it than that. When there are visuals, eyes tend to move from a presenter to the visuals, and he/she may feel more at ease.

Sharing Through Puppets Students throughout the elementary grades enjoy puppet play, for few youngsters or oldsters can resist its appeal. Hand puppets can be made from



Upper grade students can share these classics through a single transparency that tells just one episode.

Jules Verne *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (New York: Dutton, 1966) and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1956).

Rudyard Kipling *Just So Stories* (New York: Doubleday, 1952).

Washington Irving *Rip Van Winkle and the Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (New York: Macmillan, 1966).

Robert Louis Stevenson *Treasure Island* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972) and *Kidnapped* (West Haven: Conn. Pendulum, 1974).



References to a list with puppetry

B. B. and The Art of the Puppet (New York)

Macmillan 1960

Eric B. and Expert

Puppet Technique

(Boston Plays 1956)

Bernice Carlton Act It Out

(Nashville Tenn)

Abingdon 1956

Richard Cummings One

Hundred and One Hand

Puppets (New York)

McKay 1962

A. R. P. and Let's Make

Puppets (New York)

Van Nostrand 1972

Laura Ross Puppet

Show Us a Poem and

Stories (West Caldwell)

N.J. Lothrop 1970

- hand sized paper bags to which features have been added with flo-pens crayons construction paper, yarn, or colored pictures clipped from magazines,
- socks, stockings or white work gloves to which features have been added with buttons, yarn, scraps of material, twine, glitter, tinsel felt,
- the hand by marking features directly on the fist or the balls of each finger,
- styrofoam or ping pong balls stuck on the ends of the fingers or on the ends of ice cream bar sticks. Again glitter, tinsel, buttons, and yarn form the features of the stick puppets

Puppets that a puppeteer holds directly over the face can be made from

- paper plates with features drawn in with crayon and flo-pen, with eyes cut through the plates,
- full sized paper bags into which eye, nose, and mouth openings have been cut. A fringe of carpet stapled across the top of the bag simulates curly hair, large eyes with long lashes are drawn around the eye openings, and an outwardly projecting nose is stapled above the nose opening. Puppeteers determine locations for eye and nose openings by slipping on their paper bags. This insures a good fit,
- the leg of an old pantyhose slipped onto a wire coat hanger, the large triangle of which has been pulled downward to form a rectangle. The pantyhose is tied top and bottom, perhaps braided at the top to form a pigtail. Features are added to the stretched hose with construction paper and flo-pen

Body puppets that completely cover the puppeteer can be made from

- large sized cartons from which one of the six sides has been removed and through which a head hole has been cut in the opposite side. Cartons can be painted colorfully,
- people shaped and -sized cutouts. Youngsters stretch out on a piece of heavy grade cardboard while a friend traces the body outline. The youngsters cut out the outline, color themselves in, and hold their puppets in front of them during sharing time

Most of these puppets require little time to assemble and little artistic talent to produce. And the results can be really striking.

Some teachers who include puppet play among the options from which children can choose as they share stories keep a Stuff Sack in a corner of the classroom. It contains ribbons, bows, twine, scraps of fabric, lengths of old yarn, paper bags, worn out but clean socks and gloves, paper plates, buttons, and other odds and ends. Children contribute to the Stuff Sack and draw materials from it as they assemble puppets for story sharing. Sometimes children will be creative in the design of their puppets, deciding on materials not in the bag or not attempted before. For the Danish Puppeteers met at the beginning of the chapter, making their puppets from large mixing spoons was an innovation. They felt that the steadfast tin soldier probably resembled a stainless steel spoon.

Shadow puppets part of the culture of Indonesia can become a lively part of creative classroom drama experiences as well. In Indonesia, puppets are made from hard leather into which tiny holes have been punched to outline key facial and body features. The puppets are held up behind a thin curtain, and a strong beam of light is shown from behind the puppets through the curtain. In a room that is otherwise darkened, the puppets appear as silhouettes that can walk, lean over, and even raise their arms, since arm parts are attached to the body with clips and each is connected to a separate stick that can be moved up and down to operate them. Upper elementary pupils can construct a shadow puppet from heavy grade cardboard, punch tiny light passage holes in the manner of the traditional Indonesian puppet, and mount the puppet shape — it can be anything from a person shape to a tree shape to a house shape — on a stick. For a stage, a good sized piece of thin sheeting is suspended vertically. The light source is an overhead or slide projector or a regular portable spotlight. The room must be darkened for shadow puppet time.

Here are some suggestions for classroom work with puppets

- 1 Don't involve too many puppets in any one show, three or four are about all a group of elementary students can manage easily
- 2 Suggest that young children audio-tape the storyline that accompanies puppet movement. Generally children have difficulty doing lines and manipulating puppets simultaneously
- 3 Help children in upper grades arrange cue cards so that they do not have to memorize lines. Cue cards can be taped to the back edge of the table behind which puppeteers are performing to the doorjamb if the stage is a doorway, down the sides of a box or regular puppet stage. Notes on a mass of unattached pages will get disarranged during telling and cause confusion. Or designate a narrator who reads most of the lines, performers interject only the statements said by the puppets they are manipulating
- 4 Suggest to children that they each manipulate no more than one puppet so that they can truly interpret the action through puppet motion. Talk about the messages sent through a nod and a shake of the head, the slump of the body, the tilt of the head, the way we walk, at some point have all children take a puppet in hand to try out expressing feelings like tiredness, happiness, sadness, wide-awakeness, anger, and friendliness through puppet motion
- 5 Help children play with their voices so that they can express feelings vocally. Children can experiment with expressing fear, pleasure, fatigue, warmth, dislike with their voices, they can make their voices sound very young or very old, far away or nearby, high or low pitched, loud or soft, and they can produce story noises like growls, snarls, hoots, chuckles, groans, whistles. Sound is a fundamental component of communication in puppet plays so do some preparatory work in which all students hold in hand a similar puppet head they have made and experiment with different ways to cackle and caw, to vary voice pitch and loudness

Sharing with Shapes and Objects. A red block represents a stonecutter; a blue one represents him as prince; a yellow one, as the sun; a



More about shadow plays
Henry Burs II *Hand Shadows and More Hand Shadows* (New York: Dover, 1971)
Larry Kettelkamp *Shadows* (New York: Morrow, 1956)
Bill Severn *You and Your Shadow* (New York: McKay, 1961)
Louise Cochrane *Shadow Puppets in Color* (Boston: Plays, 1970)



Good stories for the class puppeteers
Ed Emberley *Ilus Punch and Judy* (Waltham: Mass. Little Brown, 1965)
Carlo Collodi *Adventures of Pinocchio* (rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1969) or (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1939)
Jan Kudlacek *Petrushka* (New York: Watts, 1971)

brown one, as a cloud, and a green one, as a mountain. As a story-telling group shares Gerald McDermott's *The Stonecutter*, each participant tells a part and adds a different colored block to a growing Story Tower in which each block symbolically communicates a part of the story.

Different colored and shaped blocks make excellent story-sharing visuals because once a collection of blocks has been assembled, the storytellers need only decide what several will represent to use them for sharing a story. In similar fashion, randomly shaped and colored pieces of flannel or felt backed construction paper can symbolically represent story characters or happenings and can be displayed sequentially upon a flannel board or even on a chalkboard with the aid of adhesive tape. Again once a collection of cutouts is available, the only task storytellers must perform is deciding which pieces will stand for each story character. In making this decision, tellers are encountering *symbolic representation* which is a fundamental aspect of language communication, and they are developing a presentational skill that is as valuable for sharing informational and conceptual content as it is in presenting stories.

Of course, small objects that are important in a story can aid in telling about it. A single storyteller can hold up just a pea in relating the problem situation inherent in "The Princess and the Pea." An older teller may be able to borrow a fife to display when telling an incident from *The Slave Dancer*, or may play a flutophone as part of the sharing. Even younger groups of story sharers should think what objects might add impact to their telling. Simple stories in which the objects to display are rather obvious, such as "The Three Bears" and "The Three Little Pigs," Ezra Jack Keats' *Goggles*, *A Letter to Amy*, and *Peter's Chair* are good for this purpose. Slightly more sophisticated stories include Robert McCloskey's *Lentil* in which a lemon and a harmonica are key ingredients and his *Homer Price* in which a bracelet and a donut play a major part, Ronald Syme's *Columbus, Finder of the New World* for which a globe makes a suitable storytelling prop, James Daugherty's *Daniel Boone* for which a Daniel Boone cap is an appropriate prop, and Harold Felton's *Mumbet: The Story of Elizabeth Freeman* with which a stack of simulated law books can be used. An older student who has read stories and biographies like these will find it relatively easy to share a story incident through a monolog in which the storyteller pretends to be the character and describes to a group of listeners how he/she feels about something that has happened in the story.

Individual story sharing in which just one pupil is relating a story or part of a story sometimes works best if initially a teller shares with a small group. For this purpose, each child in a group shares a very short story incident with three or four friends, several groups can function simultaneously. Later group memberships are rearranged so a child must retell the story to another group or two. By telling and retelling, youngsters gradually build up confidence in sharing with others, they try to improve their telling on each retelling perhaps seeing weaknesses in an original presentation and trying to eliminate the problems in future tellings. In this way, self analysis becomes more important than teacher evaluation.



Sharing a story creatively through simple props

Pantomiming Pantomime is a way to share a story, describe a situation or action, and/or express feelings and ideas. In pantomime, the gesture, the glance, the grin, the gait are the media of communication as hands, eyes, face, legs, body work together to send a message. Pantomiming is important in language experience programs. Children enjoy the fun of sending messages completely through nonverbal communication, but there is greater significance than the pleasure that is forthcoming. First, children through pantomime play can gradually loosen the inhibitions people may have about expressing themselves nonverbally. Then too children gain control over their nonverbal expressions, expressions just as significant in face to face communication as in pantomime. They begin to realize the kinds of messages that are sent most effectively through nonverbal expressions and become aware of the messages that others are sending them wordlessly.

Class Pantomimes A wise way to start pantomime play is as a total class activity with all children together interpreting an action or feeling. Children express more freely when everyone — including the teacher — is involved. A beginning pantomime activity for the very young is Let's Pretend Play, children pretend they are —

- rubber bands stretching back and forth or masses of clay being flattened out,
- balls rolling on the ground, bouncing up and down, hurling through the air,
- kites flying on the breeze,
- animals: snakes, horses, kangaroos, tigers, seagulls, hermit crabs,



References on pantomime
 Vernon Howard, *Puppet and Pantomime Plays* (New York: Sterling, 1962)
 Karl and Doug Hunt, *Pantomime: The Silent Theatre* (Wolfe City, Tex.: Athenaeum, 1964) gives a historical background
 Katharine Walker, *Eyes on Mime: Language Without Words* (New York: John Day, 1969)

- machines helicopters with propellers in action, windmills on a breezy day, a jackhammer tearing up the street,
- natural phenomena waves rolling toward shore, wind gusting, snowflakes floating to earth, clouds bouncing

Kindergartners and first graders can interpret these actions to music. With desks pushed back, they stretch, roll, fly, float, spin, wiggle, hop, scurry as the music inspires them.

Middle graders enjoy pantomimes in which everyone performs an activity. Let's Pretend Actions for the middle grades include pretending to swim, riding a bicycle, riding a skate board, bouncing a ball, jumping rope — of course, without water, bicycle, board, ball, or rope. They move on to more sophisticated group actions requiring synchronization among participants. For example, youngsters playing Let's Pretend Pass toss an imaginary ball to one another in circle groups of five or six. For this the teacher becomes a choreographer, calling out changes in the ball: "Now the ball is a large beach ball!" Or "Now it is a bowling ball — very, very heavy to throw!" Or "Now it has become a ping pong ball!" As size and heaviness of the imaginary ball change, children must interpret the differences in the way they hold and toss it. Children can be creative in their interpretations, pretending to drop or throw it too high or low. In this action pantomime, children are both sending and receiving nonverbal messages.

Charades is a productive context for action pantomimes. A student scribe prints cards, each containing an action such as washing a window, eating corn on the cob, watching a tennis game from mid-court, climbing a steep hill, buttoning a jacket, brushing teeth, picking apples from a tree, putting on boots, playing the piano, opening and closing a door, fishing. During a lull in classroom work, a pantomimist draws a card from a Pick-A-Pantomime pack of cards and on the spot performs nonverbally the given action. Watchers guess what the action is.

Performance Pantomimes Children who have participated in class pantomimes and in game-like charades will probably be eagerly ready to share stories through pantomime. Some stories lend themselves easily to pantomimed telling —

- nursery rhymes like "Little Miss Muffett," "Little Jack Horner," "Jack and Jill," several young children pantomime the action of the familiar rhyme as watchers guess the rhyme being played,
- fables like "The Miller, the Boy, and the Donkey," "The Reed and the Oak," "The Boy Who Cried Wolf," several children pantomime the action while a narrator reads the fable,
- talking beast tales like "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," "Henny Penny," and "The Three Little Pigs." A little theater company pantomimes the action while a tape they have previously made provides the storyline.

Upper graders, who may have seen comedians like Flip Wilson perform humorous pantomimes on tv, may wish to make up their own comedy skits to be presented completely without words. Humor

usually is achieved in pantomime by exaggeration so children should locate subjects that lend themselves to exaggeration — situations such as catching a mosquito putting on a pair of panty hose or a tight girl keeping a popping button closed having an itch when one's arms are filled with packages unpeeling a banana and then slipping on the peel A student pantomimist must plan out some of the actions to include in his/her skit detail is important

Learning Through Pantomime Pantomime serves two major purposes in language communication programs As noted earlier through pantomime students learn to handle nonverbal language and for this reason alone pantomime deserves a place in the elementary curriculum Pantomime, furthermore is a vehicle through which children achieve understanding of language In developing a functional vocabulary children can pantomime new words especially those dealing with actions and feelings Through pantomime children can actually visualize the meanings of words that are closely related For example children encountering words like *stalked sauntered strutted lagged behind wavered* show the meaning by performing the action In study of the way words function in sentences children can perceive the contribution of adverbs and adjectives to the meaning through pantomime activity For example children can nonverbally show the differences in meaning suggested by the modifiers in the following series of sentences

The lazy boy walked in
The eager boy walked in
The tired boy walked in
The determined boy walked in

The boy walked very slowly
The boy walked slowly
The boy walked quickly
The boy walked very quickly

In study of creative language comparisons found in metaphors and similes pupils can pretend an object is something else and use the original object to pantomime the pretended one They go on to write sentences with metaphors and similes that express the creative relationship For example in pantomime a mop can become a witch's broomstick as children compose and pantomime a sentence like *Mop ping the floor he looked like a witch riding a broomstick* Later the mop becomes a dancing partner as children compose and pantomime *Mop ping the floor to the rhythm of the music he looked like a dancer waltzing a partner across the room*

In like manner pantomime can be used in the context of reading and discussion activity In reading children can demonstrate their comprehension of story content not just by answering questions verbally but by interpreting it nonverbally Children show how a character in the story walked how another felt how another looked In normal work with reading a few children can pantomime an entire scene they have just read substituting actions for talk In discussion sessions children contribute by nonverbally demonstrating processes and actions they are describing Teachers must look for points in talk



Mo e ve bs to pantom me
wh st ed tapped
pounded shoved lifted
bounced threw tu ned
rubbed leaped laughed
brushed twsted sta ed
c ed smled frowned
kicked cranked
hammer ed sawed
pcked crushed



Objects to use as the base
for crea ve and sponta
neous pantom mes
hammer a long piece of
rope a rake a banana a
cooking pot

time to ask "Will you show us? Will you demonstrate?" For example, a youngster talking about how he/she navigates on skateboard or skis can demonstrate movements and techniques while talking. As these examples indicate, pantomime fits naturally into a variety of communication experiences.

Dramatic Playlets Children enjoy performing in informal classroom playlets in which they draw on both body and voice to communicate story action and feelings. One of the best introductions to the playlet is the *repetitive story*, children must cooperatively decide on how brief lines should be spoken and acted, and they take turns playing the lines over and over. Young children begin by listening to an old favorite such as "The Little Red Hen." Children decide how the hen must have gone progressively about her tasks and how she would have spoken her important line, "Very well then, I will do it myself!" The teacher asks "How do you think the little red hen worked when she planted the field, when she reaped the wheat, when she took the grain to the mill?" Young children answer by showing. They repeat the repetitive hen line and eventually the lines of the other animals, each time showing a different feeling through the manner of speaking the lines. When all children have tried out lines and actions, they run through the story as a cooperative playlet with specific children volunteering for the animal parts and with the teacher serving as narrator, they run through it several more times with different children playing the parts. By the time numbers of children have played each part, they will know movements and inflections important to that story and will have gained skill in using voice and body to express meanings clearly. They will also have learned that dramatic play is fun and they will want to do more.

Older students grouped in little theater companies can go on to dramatize other stories independently. Fairy tales are useful for this purpose. A classroom Dramaland Book Shelf should hold collections of Grimm, Andersen, Asbjørnsen, and Moe, adaptations of French tales by Perrault, modern tales like E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, P. L. Travers' *Mary Poppins*, and Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking*, collections of myths, storybooks that relate just one fable such as Brian Wildsmith's version of La Fontaine's *The Rich Man and the Shoe Maker*, some of the many books that relate one old fairy or tall tale like Claus Stamm's *Three Strong Women: A Tall Tale from Japan*, or Charles Perrault's *Cinderella* and *Puss in Boots*, both illustrated by Marcia Brown.

Children working cooperatively in little theater companies need to find ways to avoid extensive memorization, they can experiment with

- a narrator who reads long descriptive passages. The narrator simulates the wandering storyteller of yore who helped hand down stories from generation to generation
- cue cards held up and changed unobtrusively by a "stage hand"
- notes written behind scenery objects, for example, an easel facing the classroom audience holds a scenery picture, on the reverse side are cue cards
- scrolls containing the lines, which players hold up and unroll as the

playlet progresses. Players simply read expressively the lines from the scrolls they hold.

- spontaneous adaptations of the lines. Children know 'about' what they are going to say, but make up the specific lines as they go along, no attempt is made to say exactly what was said in previous run-throughs.

A Few More Things to Do

- 1 *Pictures into Playlets* Some nonverbal books lend themselves easily to pantomime with the younger crowd, so keep books such as Mercer Mayer's *Frog on His Own* and *Frog Where Are You?* on the Dramaland Book Shelf.
- 2 *Grab Bag Playlets* Grab bag dramatizations are fun with older children, especially when based on familiar stories. Fill a pouch with character-defining slips, each containing a description of a character that a familiar story person, such as Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*, could encounter: a disheveled hobo, a proud fisherman, a tired warlock, a majestic grandmother, a slow tortoise, a spinning spider, a lost rabbit, a bored student, an angry magician, a rusting iron man. In the pouch include slips defining actual characters met in the story: the Wizard, the Cowardly Lion, the Straw Man, the Tin Man, the Wicked Witch of the West. Students familiar with the original story of *The Wizard of Oz* pull slips from the pouch and in an impromptu dramatization make up their own version of Dorothy's encounter with all these characters who now live in Oz. On other occasions, write out grab bag character slips based on Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The impromptu dramatization tells of Alice's encounter with the Queen of Hearts, the Mad Hatter, the Hare, the Mouse. Of course, as in the previous example include some characters not in the original Carroll version so that young people must create some original story happenings.
- 3 *More Grab Bag Playlets* Concoct other dramatizations in which three or four young people each pull a character slip from a grab bag and a feeling slip (mean, funny, greedy, tired) from a second grab bag. The group pulls one location slip from a third bag (in the forest, on the top of a tall building, by the river edge) and one time slip from a fourth bag (at the stroke of midnight in 1860, during the colonial days, sometime in the future, at daybreak). Based on the combination of story ingredients selected at random, the group must put together an impromptu dramatization.
- 4 *Balloon Stories* Suggest to some storytellers that they use inflated balloons on which they have sketched facial features as storytelling props. As they share a story they have written or read and introduce each new character, they rub a balloon against their hair to charge it with static electricity. They stick the charged balloons against the wall to serve as a visual reminder of each character. Suggest that in drawing in facial features on a balloon, storytellers communicate something about a character's personality.
- 5 *Creative Effects* Encourage young dramatists to create original visuals that correlate with the story they are sharing. For example, one

student told the part of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in which Alice meets the Queen of Hearts and members of the Queen's entourage. The prop this older student used was a series of large-sized playing cards that she had made. As she told the episode, she dealt out the cards in sequence to listeners sitting in a circle on the floor. Afterward, the listeners dealt back the cards in the order distributed, retelling the story in the process.

- 6 *In Silhouette* Encourage students to express a story by placing silhouettes of story characters and objects on an overhead projector. The storytellers add and take off silhouettes at appropriate times in the story.

Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Put together a collection of colored blocks and a second collection of colored shapes that your students could use as symbolic representations during storytelling. Try out the technique yourself by selecting a story to share with the blocks and telling that story to a classroom group.
- Devise an original way through which young people in upper elementary grades can share books they have read with other students in their class.
- To get the feel of pantomimed playlets, share a story nonverbally, drawing on facial and body gestures and expressions to communicate feeling and action.

Sharing Poems

Obviously the techniques just described for student sharing of stories can be adapted to the sharing of poems. Some stories are actually written in verse form, especially some picture storybooks such as those by Theodore Geisel. Books like Geisel's *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*, *Horton Hatches the Egg*, *Green Eggs and Ham*, and *The King's Stilts* are delightful to dramatize and are particularly good for class pantomime as a narrator reads the lines.

Choral speaking and finger plays are two other ways of interpreting poems. Both are group approaches to poetry through which young people gain a feel for poetic sounds and begin to relate oral interpretation techniques to the communication of meanings. Although most choral speaking and finger play occur in the context of poetry, the techniques carry over to prose selections as well.

Introducing Children to Choral Speaking In choral speaking children led by a conductor recite together or in turn the lines of a poem. Usually in lower grades, the piece spoken is a short one that the teacher must first recite to the class. Having heard their teacher speak the piece clearly several times, the children join in. In lower and mid-

dle grades the piece may be printed out in chart form that is sometimes called a Poetry Broadside Chart. Still one must orally introduce the piece, perhaps pointing to the words of the chart while speaking. In upper grades the piece may be read from a duplicated sheet or from a book that all children have before them, but a Broadside Chart still performs a unifying service. Also children who need handwriting practice can prepare the charts for the class.

Choral speaking should be an outgrowth of children's writing. Often a poem-like piece that children have cooperatively composed and that they have inscribed on chart or board can become the stuff of choral speaking. Children immediately follow a class writing experience by standing up and reciting their piece together, perhaps with the aid of body language. In speaking it, they sometimes find rough spots that need smoothing out, and before reciting it again they add, delete, or change words so that the poem sounds better. Children who have written poems by themselves or in small groups may volunteer their pieces for class oral interpretation. In this case they print out an original Poetry Broadside with the selection and conduct the class chorus.

Since a class chorus resembles an orchestra in many respects, the teacher's role as conductor is pivotal. The conductor generally is responsible initially for establishing the rhythm, indicating when groups will contribute their parts, and keeping everyone together. At first, therefore, it is vital that the teacher speak in a clear voice and physically lead the chorus with hand, arm, and body gestures. A drum helps to maintain the beat; the conductor beats the drum with one hand while leading the chorus with the other. After a time a youngster can easily assume the role of Keeper of the Rhythm, sinking the drum as the class choruses to the beat. With some groups it is helpful to convert a rhythm band stick into a baton and conduct with it. To choristers a "stick of the stick" begins to mean halt and a "point of the stick" means join in. After a time too, some children will want to assume the role of Conductor of Chorus; the volunteer takes baton in hand to lead the class in a selection it has already practiced.

Another role that adds to the pleasure of choral speaking is Title Giver. Rather than having the total class chorus title and author of the piece, one chorister does it. Responding to a point of the stick, the Title Giver recites title and author before the class joins in on the lines. This is fine to do when the piece is composed by a class member; the young poet is reinforced not only by hearing the selection recited but his/her name as well.

Children as Orchestrators of Choral Speaking. Children should be invited to participate in the orchestration of choral speaking selections. As they work together on a piece, young people should decide how they will speak it. They decide —

- Which lines shall we recite loudly? softly? in a whisper?
- Which lines shall we recite in smooth flowing style? in staccato style?
- Which lines shall we recite slowly? haltingly? quickly?



Express on Company Magnolia Mass. makes available a series of references on choral speaking.
Louise Abney and Grace Rowe, *Choral Speaking Arrangements for the Lower Grades* (1973)
Louise Abney, *Choral Speaking Arrangements for the Upper Grades* (1973)
Marjorie Gullian, *Poetry Speaking for Children* (1973)
Elizabeth Kepple, *Speech Improvement through Choral Speaking* (1973)



Three excellent anthologies of poems that contain many pieces you can convert into a choral speaking selection.
Poems and Rhymes vol. 1 of the Chidcraft encyclopedia series, (Chicago: Field Enterprises, 1976)
Myra Cohn Livingston, *Listen, Children Listen* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1972)
Louise Untermyer, *The Golden Book of Poems for the Very Young* (Racine, Wis.: Golden Press, 1971)
May Hill Arbuthnot, *Time for Poetry* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott Foresman, 1951) is also excellent.

- Where shall we make long pauses? short pauses?
- Which words shall we speak with greater emphasis? with lesser emphasis?
- How shall we change our voices to indicate dialog?
- Which lines shall we speak together? in groups? in solo?

As children participate in these basic orchestrational decisions, they are encountering fundamental elements of oral communication. They begin to relate elements such as loudness/softness, short pause/long pause, high pitch/low pitch to meanings being communicated. They begin to interpret punctuation vocally, pausing longer at a period stop than at a comma stop, longer at a semicolon stop than at a comma stop. In this respect, young people through choral speaking acquire fundamental understandings of language as well as enjoy the "music" of poetry.

A fine piece for children to speak and orchestrate together is Rose Fyleman's "Goblin," for the meaning of the piece is evident and the punctuation and italics are easy to translate vocally.



Children can compose original verses by substituting words of rhythmic values as in:
 He l ps
 And he d ps
 And he c ps
 And he s ps
 He ca s
 And he fa"s
 And he wande s
 in the ha"s

A Goblin

A goblin lives in *our* house, in *our* house, in *our* house,
 A goblin lives in *our* house all the year round
 He bumps
 And he jumps
 And he thumps
 And he stumps
 He knocks
 And he rocks
 And he rattles at the locks
 A goblin lives in *our* house, in *our* house
 A goblin lives in *our* house all the year round

One group decided that as a class they would speak the beginning and ending sections in unison, really stressing the italicized *our*. They decided too that it would be most effective if they spoke the first "all the year round" in a staccato whisper simultaneously making pointing-like jabs with the right index finger to stress those words. The second reading of the refrain they made louder and louder and louder to suggest that the goblin was getting closer and closer. This contrasted nicely with the sudden quiet of the last four words "all the year round," which they again whispered.

The class decided that the short lines in the middle of the piece should be recited by individual children. The lines should be spoken quickly with each successive child in the choral chain contributing promptly. To help these children do their parts, the conductor pointed from one to the next to keep the poetry action going.

Different Ways to Chorus a Piece. As the previous example implies, it is possible to arrange a selection and choristers in a variety of ways. Here are six formats for class choring.

Refrain Longer poems that include a short repetitive refrain lend themselves easily to choral speaking. The teacher reads or recites the

verses with children joining in on the chorus. A poem for young children to interpret through a refrain chorus is "Little Black Bug" by Margaret Wise Brown

Little Black Bug

Little black bug
Little black bug,
Where have you been?
I've been under the rug,
Said the little black bug
Bug ug ug-ug

Little green fly,
Little green fly,
Where have you been?
I've been way up high
Said the little green fly
B z z z z z z z z z z z z z z z z

Little old mouse,
Little old mouse,
Where have you been?
I've been all through the house,
Said little old mouse
Squeak-eak-eak-eak-eak

After hearing the poem, choristers practice the animal sound lines, "Squeak-eak-eak-eak-eak," "B z z z z z z z z z z z z z z z z," and "Bug ug-ug-ug," written on the board. When the teacher points at the sound words on the board, choristers add these to the poem being shared orally. It is relatively easy for young children to compose follow-up stanzas about little blue jay, little brown horse, little yellow cat, little pink pig — stanzas that pattern after those of Margaret Wise Brown. As soon as children have composed additional stanzas, the lines can be read orally with choristers coming in on the animal sound lines.

A more sophisticated piece that lends itself to the refrain format and can, therefore, be used with middle graders is David McCord's "Song of the Train", the narrator recites the initial four lines of each stanza with the class joining in on the repetitive end lines, stressing words as indicated by McCord's italics

Song of the Train

Clickety clack
Wheels on the track,
This is the way
They begin the attack
Click ety-clack,
Click-ety clack
Click ety, *clack-ety*,
Click ety
Clack

Clickety-clack
Over the crack,
Faster and faster
The song of the track

} lines to be spoken by a narrator

} the choral group

} the narrator

Oral sharing stories poems humor 155



Poems for refrain chorus ng

Laura Richards "The Umbrella Brigade" and

"The Baby Goes to Boston — children speak

the repetitive lines
Walter de la Mare

"Quack!"

Kate Greenaway "Jump — jump — jump"

"Mother Goose" "The Mischievous Raven"

See anthologies listed on p. 153

Clickety clack,
Clickety clack,
Clickety, clackety,
Clackety
Clack

the choral group

Riding in front,
Riding in back,
Everyone hears
The song of the track
Clickety clack
Clickety-clack,
Clickety, *clickety*,
Clackety
Clack

the narrator

Clickety clack
Clickety-clack,
Clickety, *clickety*,
Clackety
Clack

the choral group

Again this poem is ideal for choral speaking because the sound pattern is a fine one after which students can model their own sound effect pieces. Following the pattern of five sound-filled last lines in each stanza, upper graders can write five sound-filled lines about a jet, a jackhammer, a motor boat, or a blender. They then compose several introductory lines for each of three stanzas. When lines have been written out on a poetry chart, the students stand up to chorus the last five sound lines after one of their classmates reads the four introductory lines of each stanza.

Unison A conductor can lead an entire class in the speaking of a piece. Especially with children in lower primary grades, the selection initially should be a short one, probably no longer than the four lines of the refrains they have been contributing as part of refrain chorusing. Also because children have trouble coordinating their voices, it pays to begin with a rhythmic selection. Kindergarten and first grade teachers recommend nursery rhymes as a jump-off point, rhymes like "Jack Be Nimble," "Humpty Dumpty," "Pat-a-Cake," and "Pease Porridge Hot." Little rhymes like Robert Louis Stevenson's "Rain" and "Time to Rise" are also recommended for beginners. With older children some of Christina Rossetti's poems are appropriate. Her "Mix a Pancake" almost sounds like Mother Goose, and her "Who Has Seen the Wind?" has a smooth flowing melody.

Line-a-Child or Line-a-Group A series of children or groups can each in turn speak a line or two of poetry. Verse with short lines and distinct line ends lends itself to line-a-child chorusing. A delightful and familiar piece for the younger voice choir is "Chick, Chuck, Chatterman" from Mother Goose. Individual children or two- or three-person chorus teams recite each of the line segments.

Cluck, Cluck, Chatterman

Chick chick chatterman
How much are your geese?
Chick, chick, chatterman
Five cents apiece

to be spoken by
first group or child
second group or child

Chick, chick, chatterman	}	third group or child
That's too dear		
Chick, chick, chatterman	}	fourth group or child
Get out of here		

This piece is fine for chorusing because the repetitive sounds are so striking. A poem like Ivy Eastwick's "Shadow Dance" is also suitable for choral speaking by younger groups since there is much action — action that children can pantomime as they speak.

For the older voice choir, nonrhythmic pieces like Myra Cohn Livingston's "The Sun Is Stuck" are preferred. Each of seven participants speaks a thought line, adopting an explanatory tone and rising to his/her feet to announce the line. The final word *man* can be repeated in echo style by each of the participants after the final line has been spoken, with each successive *man* spoken a little more softly until the last one fades away.

The Sun Is Stuck

The sun is stuck	}	to be spoken by
I mean, it won't move		first participant
I mean it's hot, man and we need		second participant
a red-hot poker to pry it loose		
Give it a good shove and		third participant
roll it across the sky		fourth participant
And make it go down		fifth participant
So we can be cool,		sixth participant
Man		seventh participant

(Each participant then repeats the word *man* in turn to produce an echo effect.)

Other poems that are structured appropriately for line-a-child or line-a-group interpretation are John Ciardi's "The River Is a Piece of Sky", Eve Merrin's "A Lazy Thought", "Mean Song," and "Conversion" from *There Is No Rhyme for Silver*, Vachel Lindsay's "The Potatoes' Dance" from *Collected Poems*, and for younger children Kathleen Fraser's "Tree Climbing" and Aileen Fisher's "When It Comes to Bugs" and "Who's Sleepy" from *I Wonder How, I Wonder Why*.

Sound Groups Dividing a class into students with high-pitched voices and low-pitched voices and having the contrasting voice groups speak different sections of a poem is a fourth format for choral speaking, sometimes termed *antiphonal*. Best for this format are poems that have clear cut sections, with distinct stanzas to be chorused back and forth between two voice groups, or with segments that can be distinguished according to meaning and/or mood. With poems comprised of three or four segments, the class is divided into more sound groups to interpret the numerous divisions of the piece.

One piece for two-voice interpretation is "If You Ever" (author unknown). One group choruses the lines that repeat "ever, ever, ever", the other, the lines that repeat "never, never, never . . ."

If You Ever

	If you ever ever ever ever ever	} first group
	If you ever ever ever meet a whale	}
	You must never never never never never	
	You must never never never touch its tail	} second group
For sound-group	For if you ever ever ever ever ever	}
chorus ng	If you ever ever ever touch its tail	
Whisky Fnsky	You will never never never never never	}
Hipp ty hop!	You will never never meet another whale	
Up he goes		} second group
To the treetop!		

Whirly twirly
Round and round!
Down he scampers
To the ground

Furly curly
What a tail!
Ta! as a feather
Broad as a sa!

Where's his supper?
In the shell!
Snap crackly
Out it fell
author unknown

Some of the poems of A. A. Milne can be chorused pleasurably in sound groups. "If I Were King" is good for two-sound interpretation while "The Four Friends" works effectively with four sound groups, each group speaking the lines about one of the four friends. Both are in the classic *When We Were Very Young*. Some of the limericks by Lear found in his *Complete Nonsense Book* can be used in upper grades, with each sound group contributing a limerick back-to-back. Also fun to play with are the pieces in Beatrice de Regniers' *Something Special*.

Rounds A variation on the group format is to have a main group chorus the words while other groups simultaneously contribute repetitive chanting sounds. If each group joins the chorusing several seconds after the preceding group, the result is round-like. To make rounds from poems, one must select pieces with a steady rhythm.

Since nursery rhymes have a strong, steady beat, they are a fine introduction to round chorusing. Starting with one like "Hey Diddle Diddle," teacher and students repeat it until all are familiar with words and rhythm. They keep the beat through an even striking of the class drum.

Hey diddle diddle!
The cat and the fiddle!
The cow jumped over the moon
The little boy laughed to see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

Once children know the rhythm, one group repeats a simple but related chant such as 'Moo, Moo. Moo, Moo.' After the chanting group is in full swing, the rest speak the lines, maintaining the same beat as the chanters. With older children, two or three different chants can go on simultaneously with the word chorusing — chants like 'Middley Moo. Middley Moo,' or "Moo Fiddlely. Moo Fiddlely." There is much fun to be had in this kind of chorusing and much learning too. Children are encountering the elements of different rhythmic beats, and through the oral language experience they are encountering new words and different sentence patterns.

Body Chants To many choral speaking selections, children can inject action. Some verses — filled with action words — seem made for body chanting and chorusing. A gem is Eve Merriam's "Toaster Time."

Toaster Time

Tick/tick/tick tick/tick/tick/tick/

Toast up a sandwich/quick/quick/quick/ }

Hamwich/

Jamwich/

Lick/lick/tick/!

the [/] separates
parts spoken by
each child in the
chorus line

Tick tick tick tick tick tick — Stop!

POP!

} you decide how to
orchestrate these
lines

As each participant in a chorus line contributes a verbal tick, he/she makes a ticking motion with the body. Saying the sandwich line, a child makes a quick pointing gesture with the arm, a gesture repeated by each succeeding participant who contributes a verbal quick hamwich jamwich, or lick. You and your students can figure out what to do with the remaining ticks, the stop, and the pop.

Not all students need contribute the same actions to a body chant. In some cases, a class may identify several actions that fit the meaning forming into sections with each contributing a different one. For example, interpreting "Hickory, Dickory, Dock" as a round, one section may decide to move heads left and right, a second to tick index fingers left and right, a third to swing arms back and forth. Since members of each section must synchronize their motions, it is both helpful and fun to assign one member of each section as Concert Master. At a signal from the Conductor, the Concert Master of a section starts the motions, others in that section synchronize with him/her. By the way, through the activity students are learning about the structure of an orchestra — the function of concert master.



Try "The Lobster Quadrille" (see p. 2) as a body chant with older students who are enjoying Lewis Carroll's *Adventures in Wonderland* (New York: Macmillan, 1865).

Two Questions About Choral Speaking

- 1 How does choral speaking fit into the overall language program? Children chorus together pieces they have written. They write pieces that pattern as do poems chanted. They expand choral speaking into spontaneous dramatizations, they discover things about writing style, punctuation, and sentence patterning through their oral interpretation of pieces. Not only can children interpret poetry through verse choirs, but they can interpret prose selections, in the process they begin to understand the repetitive patterns of prose. Because choral speaking can lead in so many diverse directions for learning about language and because it can lead children to think creatively as they decide how to interpret a piece, teachers must not overlook choral speaking as a possible component of integrated communication sequences.
- 2 Should choral speaking be used for assembly programs and parent presentations? As many language authorities have suggested, to get all children to speak a poem in perfect coordination is a difficult undertaking, requiring endless repetition especially if children are to perform a lengthy piece in unison. Practicing the same selection over

and over for a performance, however, children cease to find the experience pleasurable. Although a short and simple choral speaking selection may be included at times in an assembly program, chorusing together or in turn has its value mainly as a classroom learning experience, not as a performance activity. It is a way of enjoying, interpreting, and experiencing literature and language together.

Finger and Action Plays for Young Children. Early childhood is a time of active involvement and exploration, of imaginative play, and of rapid development of language. Young children in kindergarten and first grade are balls of continual motion — twisting, turning, wiggling, fiddling, squirming with hands, feet, head, torso contributing to the motion. They delight in Let's Pretend activity, eagerly falling into creative play in which they become powerful steamrollers, hopping kangaroos, or even bananas being peeled or elastic bands being stretched. They are fascinated with sounds, for human sound sequences are assuming meaning and beginning to stand for things and events around them. At this stage in development finger and action plays can completely absorb children's attention.

In finger and action plays, children speak or sing a short nursery rhyme-like piece, simultaneously interpreting it with fingers and body. Through the plays, children make contact with poetry, finding it to be pleasure-filled, they enjoy the rhythms and the sounds. Second, the little ones have the opportunity to manipulate the fine muscles of the fingers. It is difficult to move the fingers to simulate the motion of a spider, and it is at times difficult to hold up just eight fingers. Third, some of the rhymes include number and directional concepts. Children interpreting the numbers and directions with fingers and body are increasing their understanding of number sequences, of elementary addition and subtraction, as well as of left/right, up/down, through/into. A traditional finger play favorite that you probably recall from childhood days is "Ency-Weency Spider." Other old favorites include "I'm a Little Teapot," "Where Is Thumbkin?" "One Little, Two Little, Three Little Indians," "This Is the Church, This Is the Steeple."

It is possible to convert familiar poems into finger and action plays, often with the assistance of children themselves. One young group converted "It's Raining" into the action play shown below.

It's raining. It's pouring

(Move hands up and down as fingers simulate rain action.)

The old man is snoring

(Make snoring noises.)

He went to bed

(Bend head to pretend sleep.)

And bumped his head

(Rub head.)

And couldn't get up in the morning.

(Bend head again to pretend sleep.)

Even a lengthier selection such as Wanda Gág's *ABC Bunny* adapts readily into finger play action. On a line like "A for apple big and red," youngsters hold their hands in an apple shape. On a line like "D for



Sources of Fingerplay Ideas

Wagon Let's Do Fingerplays (Washington D.C. Luce 1962)

Francis Jacobs Finger Plays and Action Rhymes (New York: Lothrop 1941)

Don't Let a-Care and Other Games (Chicago: Rand McNally 1970)

dash" children race their fingers through the air. Again children decide just what motions they wish to play with each line.

Here are a few newer pieces for finger and action play that have been written with the younger child in mind.

Fingers climb up ladders
They tumble down the slide
Fingers run quite quickly
To find a place to hide

(Make fingers walk upward)
(Make fingers slip downward)
(Run with the fingers)
(Put both hands behind back)

(On successive repetitions children can substitute words like *rabbits*, *children*, *squirrels*, and so forth for *fingers*)

One great, green frog sitting on a
rock
Jumps into the water and makes a
big plop

(Stick the thumb of one hand
through the fist of the other hand)
(Dive the thumb off the hand that
simulates the rock)

Two great, green frogs sitting on a
rock
Jump into the water and make a
bigger plop

(Stick two fingers of one hand
through the fist of the other hand)
(Dive the two fingers off the hand
that simulates the rock)

Three great, green frogs sitting on a
rock
Jump into the water and make the
biggest plop

(Stick three fingers through the fist
of the other hand)
(Dive the three fingers off the
hand that simulates
the rock)

Ten chattering starlings fly out to
play
Sunday morning at the break of
day

(Move all fingers in a flying
motion)

Nine of the starlings hide themselves
away
Now one seeks carefully for where
they stay

(Make a fist with both hands,
letting only one finger protrude)
(Wiggle the one finger)

Ten chattering starlings fly out to
play
Monday morning at the break of
day

(Move all fingers in a flying
motion)

Eight of the starlings hide themselves
away
Now two seek carefully for where
they stay

(Make a fist with both hands,
letting only two fingers protrude)
(Wiggle the two fingers)

(On successive repetitions, change the day of the week, as well as the number of starlings that hide away)

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## Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Review the characteristics of unison, refrain, line-a child, sound group, round, and body chorusing. Then decide how you and a second grade group could orchestrate 'One Misty, Moisty Morning' (below). Think: Will you do it as a refrain? in sound groups? Will you add body action? Try it with the group.



Loca an anthology of  
finger plays such  
as Mary M. and Paula  
Zajac's Finger Play or  
Volume 5 and  
Roberta Pond's Finger  
Play Fun. Let a two or  
three year olds are  
appropriate to share with  
younger children.

One misty moisty morning  
When cloudy was the weather  
There I met an old man  
Clothed all in leather  
He began to compliment  
And I began to grin  
How do you do  
And how do you do  
And how do you do again?

- From an anthology of children's poetry, select one piece to use as a choral speaking activity with an upper grade class. Then decide how you would orchestrate it: write on a copy of it who will do each line and how it will be done. Or if you are teaching, share the poem with a group. Cooperatively decide how to chorus it and then enjoy the chorusing experience together.

## Sharing Humor

Donna Vreeland, a fifth grader, created a play on words when she wrote "You're no bunny until some bunny loves you." Her word play tickled the funny bone of fellow students when she shared it and her accompanying drawing of two hand holding bunnies with the class during a Humor Break. As children move through upper elementary grades, they acquire a sense of humor. To capitalize on their developing interest in humor, teachers can make fun with words part of classroom sharing sessions. Even as young people prepare for an afternoon of information and/or story sharing, they can create and locate related humor to be shared at afternoon's end so that everyone 'enjoys' laughing.



From Lewis Carroll  
Through the Looking  
Glass  
"I love my love with an  
H" Alice couldn't help  
beginning because he is  
Happy. I hate him with an  
H because he is hideous.  
I feed him with — with —  
with Ham-sandwiches and  
Hay. His name is Haggle  
and he lives —"  
"He lives on the H!" —  
the King remarked simply  
without the least idea that  
he was joining in the  
game.

**Alphabet Plays** There are numbers of ways to play with words and the alphabet. Here are a few A B Cs

- 1 **I Love My Love with an H** Play the old game in which children pull letters of the alphabet from a hat and insert a word beginning with that letter in each of the blanks of the alphabet story.

I love my love with an/a \_\_\_\_\_ because he/she is  
\_\_\_\_\_ I hate him/her because he/she is  
\_\_\_\_\_ I feed him/her with \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_ His/her name is \_\_\_\_\_ and he/she lives in \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ He/she took me to \_\_\_\_\_ and bought me  
 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ We were married in  
 \_\_\_\_\_, and now I am \_\_\_\_\_

A player who cannot complete the letter earns a point for the opposite team if the next player on that team can complete it

- 2 **Who Where What Play** a simplified version of *I Love My Love*. Players complete the blanks in the sentence "I met a \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ He/She/It introduced me to a/an \_\_\_\_\_." Words tell who, then where, and then what. Each word offered must begin with the letter of the alphabet chosen at random.

- 3 **'X' is for** Younger children complete lines that begin A is for \_\_\_\_\_, B is for \_\_\_\_\_, and so forth by adding a noun that starts with the letter and is preceded by at least one adjective that also starts with that letter. A is for 'anty' apples. Play this too as a team game with children drawing letters from a grab bag. Include more than one copy of each letter, so that children must dig deeply and so that they do not repeat any of the words already given in the playing. Ask upper graders to supply three or four adjectives instead of just one.

- 4 **A Brown Cow Drank Eagerly** Young people write 'poems,' the words of which are in alphabetical order. Humor writers start with any beginning letter as D in "Dogs eat fried gophers hungrily." Often to find a next word, composers must draw on the ridiculous with the final product being laugh filled. This can be done as a class composing or an individual learning station activity with children sharing their products orally.



Charlene Bergmann encouraged her students to compose nonsense alliterations. One composed Super Susie Scuddur Slurps sodas on Saturdays and Slips on sunflowers. Spec ally on Sundays. She was separated from her snail. On the sixth of September And that is the end of this Super silly story.

**Riddles, Conundrums, and Knock-Knocks** Most adults are familiar with the Mother Goose rhymes that are essentially riddles. "As I Was Going to St. Ives," "Little Nancy Etticoat," and "Humpty Dumpty." They remember that Humpty Dumpty was really an egg and Nancy Etticoat a candle, they know that only one was going to St. Ives. Children are a veritable gold mine of riddles like the classic "Black and white and red all over." They require little encouragement to listen for and remember newer riddles from television viewing and to search through riddle books for tricky ones to share during times set aside as Humor Breaks. Once youngsters have shared riddles they have discovered, they can devise original humor bits in a section of the writing center captioned "Right Riddles Here!"

**Conundrums** are riddles set forth as questions. The answer is usually a play on words of similar sound or meaning. Two conundrums many people remember from younger days are "How far can anyone walk into the woods?" (Answer: Half way, then one walks out.) and "Why can't you starve in the desert?" (Answer: Because of the sand which is there.) During a morning session an upper grade teacher can post conundrums such as these in the Humor Corner of bulletin or chalkboard. At the end of the day, children supply possible answers some of which will be 'better' than the answer remembered. After several rounds of teacher-initiated conundrum play, young people can search

out or dream up samples to place on the board. Again children think about the conundrums all day long and try out answers orally during Humor Break.

Much the same can be done with the "knock-knock" pattern familiar to all of us. Students generally possess lengthy repertoires of knock-knocks that they will willingly share during Humor Break and will eagerly accept an invitation to write a few of their own.

Riddles, conundrums, and knock-knocks are a marvelous material to introduce young people to homonyms and homographs, since humor may be derived from the fact that several words may have the same pronunciation (*bear, bare, guilt, gill, blue, blew*) and that one word may have two or more completely different meanings (*fair, bat*). Children can devise lengthy lists of what can be called "two-faced words" to make into their own "sillies." They print two-faced words they uncover on the windows with tempera paint where the words serve as constant reminders of combinations to work into word plays.

**Other Various and Sundry Forms of Humor.** Upper graders enjoy tongue-in-cheek humor and quickly become proficient in producing it when given just a slight nudge. Here are a few ideas for engaging young people in humor that they share later during Humor Break.

- 1 **Daffy Letters to Mother Goose.** Children write daffy letters to Mother Goose characters providing outlandish advice on how the characters can overcome their problems — for example, they write to Jack and Jill telling how to prevent future spills, to Little Miss Muffet advising on how to handle spiders, to the king's men explaining how to put Humpty Dumpty together again, to Mother Hubbard suggesting how to fill the cupboard. Children can write similar "daffies" to fairy tale characters like Snow White, Cinderella, and the Ugly Duckling.
- 2 **Advice to the Lovelorn.** Upper graders can compose problem letters directed to 'Dear Abby' that set forth ridiculous problems. Other youngsters become Abby and write back humorous advice.
- 3 **Dilly Tales and Rhymes.** Children write parodies of familiar fairy tales and rhymes, filling them with daffy-dilly happenings that are ridiculous. Here is an example:

Miky, Miky  
Sat on his bike  
Miky, Miky  
Felt all up tight  
All of his friends and all of his brothers  
Couldn't put Miky Mike  
Back together just right

- 4 **Song Takeoffs.** Parodies of familiar songs are fun to write and share through singing. In writing a song parody, youngsters maintain the rhythm of the original piece and some of the words, however, they substitute new words so that the result is filled with tongue-in-cheek humor, as is this example taken from *Keep Earth Clean Blue and Green*.



Sources of classroom humor from Scholastic Book Service (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.)  
Helen Alpert, *Laugh Your Head Off* (1969)  
Arrow Book of Jokes and Riddles (1969)  
Robert Blake, *One Hundred and One Elephant Jokes* (1964)  
Gertrude Crampton, *Your Own Joke Book* (1957)  
Jack Heller, *Jokesmith's Jubilee* (1962)  
B. Keane, *Jest in Pun* (1969) and *Laughsville, U.S.A.* (1969)  
Edna Preston, *Barrel of Chuckles* (1960), *Barrel of Fun* (1957) and *Barrel of Laughs* (1959)  
Put these in your Humor Corner in the inexpensive paperback editions. Call that corner "Laughsville, U.S.A." after the Scholastic title.



God bless America  
 • Waste high in trash  
 Trash behind her, before her  
 Trailing trash in her rivers and streams  
 From the mountains to the prairies to the oceans littered high  
 God bless America  
 May we survive

- 5 **Jolly Jokes** The stand up comedian is a popular tv performer Ask children to listen for and remember jokes to share during Humor Breaks Invite them as well to concoct their own Jolly Jokes, the best ones to be compiled in a class volume of Joke Jollies To encourage children to share found or original humor, keep a Joke Stool in your classroom The Joke Stool is any high stool or chair on which a Class Jester can perch while relating a tidbit of fun

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Search the library for several books of riddles, jokes, and humor for children From the books you find, select five or six items and print them on individual chart pages Share your selections with children as a way of starting them toward sharing humor together

### Sharing Information and Ideas

During the Visit with Hans Christian Andersen described earlier in this chapter, some fifth graders presented facts and ideas about the life and work of the famed storyteller of Denmark Others, referring to a guide they had prepared interviewed a stand in for Mr Andersen who answered in terms of what he had learned about the great spinner of tales Very often it is possible to piggyback creative dramatizations with interesting informational presentations By doing so children begin to see important similarities between presentations and dramatizations They discover that informational presentations can be structured to hold attention just as closely as dramatizations, that visuals can add impact and clarity not only to dramatizations but to informational presentations, and that voice and body play just as important a role in informational presentations as in dramatizations

Formats for sharing information and ideas include the interview, the panel discussion, the debate, and the individual report or announcement Through functioning in a variety of formats within a relaxed classroom environment, children especially in grade three and up, acquire 1 ability to gather information for sharing, 2 ability to select, summarize, and order information they have gathered and 3 ability to present the information forcefully and clearly Because presenting is part of particularly pleasurable classroom times, children begin to view sharing as something to anticipate, not to fear, and as they acquire this perception, they gain poise in presenting

**Information Gathering Tasks** Children need assistance in gathering information they will share orally with others. One can provide this assistance by structuring numbers of classroom sessions in which children perform information gathering tasks first in concert then independently. By working step by step on a common information gathering problem, children come to know how to begin and how to proceed. The steps become second nature.

**Keeping on Track** Before setting out to gather material to share orally, young people should clarify the purpose of their informational search and identify the kinds of information they will need. Time before information gathering sessions can be dedicated to talk about purposes and needs. For example, before setting out on a local Listen and Look Excursion from which each observer is to bring back one observation to share, a teacher can ask: For what are we going to listen? look? What kinds of observations will interest others who will hear about them during sharing? Young children search out the amazing, the unusual, the hard to find. Upon returning to the classroom, youngsters sit in a circle on floor or in chairs; each describes the listen or look help she made on the outing.

In a similar way, before setting out to uncover information in the library, a teacher can ask: What is the main question we are trying to answer? What are related questions? What information is relevant to these questions? Irrelevant? What information will appeal to listeners? Children limit the extent of their investigation, focus on one main area, and map out a series of specific questions to guide their library search, so that facts gathered do not stray from the point. As an opener, a teacher may involve an entire upper elementary class studying the Revolutionary War in an opinion supporting search on a subjective question such as: Who was the greatest hero of the American Revolution? In preparation, young people talk about their task — to select someone they believe to be the greatest hero and eventually to convince others of the greatness of the one chosen. Young people identify kinds of facts that will support their choice, probably a listing of the hero's great contributions and the significance of those contributions to the progress of the American Revolution. In the library, each pupil chooses his/her great hero and searches out references for facts to support the choice. Each writes on a note card items identified in class — in this case, the contribution and the significance. Irrelevant data such as birthday, birth place, spouse's name are not noted. Now when students return to the classroom, they join in a Sharing Circle with each student announcing his/her choice and supplying data to support the selection. After all have presented, the group can decide on a class hero by voting.

Other investigations in which children are forced to make a selection and collect information purposefully are initiated by questions like: If you had to move from this country to another, to which country would you move? Which plant is most important to human progress? Which American president contributed most to the U.S.A.? Who was the greatest ballplayer of all times? Teachers can work out such opinion-based problems that correlate directly with a module of

Topical lessons you may have to develop include using the card catalog, locating books on the library shelf, finding oversized picture books, and reference books. Background include Guinness Book of World Records as a special dictionary and encyclopedia. Related references: 172 / Bongiorno, How Can I Find Out? (Chicago: Children Press, 1963). Anna, Stay What Happened at the Library? (Chicago: Pay and Lee, 1971). Peary, Short Libraries and You (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964). See chap. 11 pp. 454-55.

natural or social science work in progress so students can make an initial selection based on some understanding already acquired through study. All content areas of the curriculum — from art to zoology — are ideal contexts in which students can build information gathering skills. As Leo Schell so aptly states, "There are so many opportunities for information gathering within on going activities in various curricular areas that there is no need to create topics simply for the purpose of giving experience in gathering information." Teachers should look to all curricular areas.

**Noting** Dr. Schell's point applies equally to the recording process. As part of their work in all curricular areas, students should have the opportunity to record notes on material they are gathering for future sharing. For example, young students out on a scientific nature walk can pursue the information gathering task by carrying along a Noting Card for recording relevant points for later sharing. Initially they will want to prestructure their Noting Cards to assure systematic recording of points. Youngsters preparing for a Listen and Look Excursion as described earlier may simply write *Listen and Look Observation One* on the top side of an index card, *Listen and Look Observation Two* on the reverse. As the class sits quietly listening and looking at a first observation site, each child names his/her observation next to the word *One* and describes it below. At the second Listen and Look Site, each completes the reverse side in the same way. Preparing for the support of *Your Revolutionary Hero* session that occurs as part of the ongoing social science experiences, students divide a card into two columns, one labeled *Great Contribution*, the second *What Was Great About It*.



Finding information to share

The card becomes a brief form for recording relevant information and serves as a guide for oral reporting. The compactness of a single Noting Card prevents word-for-word copying of reference material, forcing the young person to be selective.

In similar fashion children can prepare guides for interviewing and investigating. Young people planning to gather information by interviewing a knowledgeable person may prepare for the interview by listing a series of key questions on their Noting Cards. Each person on an interview team lists a question on each side of his/her card so that many areas are explored in an interview. Interviewers record answers directly on their cards. Conducting an experimental investigation as part of science study, young people may prepare a chart or graph card on which they systematically plot specific data each day, hour, minute, and/or second of the investigation. At first such interview and experimental noting guides emerge from preliminary class talk about purposes of the investigation or interview so students perceive the relationship between purposes of information gathering and the structure of a Noting Card. Eventually students independently or in groups map out their own Noting Card guides for recording information.

Rather than noting on cards, older children may prefer to keep cumulative Jotting Books — small, bound idea books in which they record notes on ongoing class observations, experiments, readings, and interviews. In addition, young people jot down miscellaneous thoughts for sharing — an idea that strikes the fancy, an observation made on the way to school, a significant fact heard on tv or read in a news report, even a joke or poem — all thoughts 'too great to be forgotten'. Jotting Books can be homemade by stapling oaktag covers to several sheets of paper, old style copybooks generally available in schools as well as stenographic notebooks work nicely.

By recording in Jotting Books on a continuing basis, young people may discover how helpful it is to note down important thoughts before those ideas escape the mind. Students can learn how to subdivide the Jotting Book into sections, recording different kinds of thoughts in different sections for fingertip locating during discussion sessions. Jotting Books have 'carry-along capacity' — books can be carried along by students to assembly programs, class outings, individual assignments, such as relaying announcements to other classes, the school office, or home. They become a handy way to hang on to ideas that should be shared rather than mislaid.

Once the Jotting Book has been established as part of ongoing communication activity, varied assignments can be developed that invite students to jot down information in it and draw directly on that information during reporting. These assignments include

- 1 *Town Crier* Individual students take turns ferreting out details about school events like sports happenings, assembly programs and even the cafeteria menu. The Town Criers find out before the event by asking participants and by reading posters. They announce their findings to the rest of the class.
- 2 *Hear Ye! Hear, Ye!* Classroom Criers jot down notes on the progress of a classroom pet or on an ongoing investigation of plant growth.

- crystal development, changes as a result of decay, and so forth  
Talking from their notes rather than reading from notes word for word, students orally report findings
- 3 **The Latest Arrivals** Volunteers interview the school librarian to determine the latest book acquisitions, especially the latest reference books. Children bring back a few to display to their classmates and report on others by referring to notes in their Jotting Books. This is a fine way to encourage children to talk about selected items rather than reading lengthy and boring lists. In the past some reporting in elementary schools has degenerated into children's reading off lists of facts that lull listeners to sleep. Help children ferret out the interesting piece of information on which to expand. In short, help them avoid the fact-reading trap.
  - 4 **WPBC** Each week one or two young people become World News Reporters as part of ongoing current events study. At a specified time each day, the reporters listen to a radio news broadcast on a classroom transistor radio, perhaps going into the adjacent hall or a library corner or wearing earphones so the radio noise will not disrupt the class. From the assortment of news reported on the broadcast, the class reporters select one or two major happenings to report back to the class. To aid them in their task, they note key facts in their Jotting Books and talk from those notes during general sharing time. They name their class radio station something like "Pierrepoint Broadcasting Company," after the school name.
  - 5 **And Now for the Weather!** Upper graders who have studied weather phenomena as part of a science module apply their understandings and skills to a continuing analysis of weather. A Meteorological Team takes periodic temperature and barometric pressure readings from equipment placed outside the window or in the playground; they analyze the cloud pattern daily and decide whether the clouds are cirrus, cumulus, cumulonimbus, and so forth. Information is recorded and reported, some meteorological teams will want to try making predictions based on their readings and can share predictions as well as a rating of the accuracy of past predictions. By the way, study of this kind is an avenue to vocabulary growth as young people encounter sophisticated words like *cumulonimbus* and use them in everyday reporting. As big words like this surface in science and social science study, a section of window area becomes a Word Window. Young people print with tempera the new words directly on the portion of window where they are continually available for use in speaking and writing. Later as the focus of classroom interest shifts, the window words can be washed away and new ones substituted.
  - 6 **Coming Attractions** A Tv Attractions Team scans the weekly tv guides and reports Monday on programs to watch during the week. Reporters should announce not only specific programs and times but indicate reasons for their choices as they talk from the notes they have jotted down. Other teams can announce other coming attractions in the local community: a performance by a little theater group, a new movie at the local theater, a parade, a PTA cake sale, even a sale at the area shopping center.

**Quoting** A third task in gathering information is to select words to quote directly from all those spoken by an interviewee, read in newspaper or book heard on tv or radio broadcast Essentially the task is to determine what is most significant and when a direct quotation will have the greatest impact

A teacher can start young oral reporters selecting "quotable quotes" by introducing them to the quotation mark Students talk about using quotation marks to set off other people's words and about the fact that a speaker or writer must credit the originator with words borrowed directly Working from piles of newspapers and news magazines with articles that report on a particular news event, in groups students read the relevant stories and decide on the one quotable quote that best sums up the importance or impact of the event Questions such as Who made the remark? Why is he/she worth quoting? Which phrases sound the best to be quoted or communicate the idea most clearly? help children make sound decisions about the "quotableness" of specific words In similar fashion after a classroom speaker has departed, listeners consider the most significant point the speaker made This point in the speaker's words becomes a quotable quote to be recorded in Jotting Books And as students head to the library to search out information on a topic for later sharing, they keep alert for just a line or two to copy directly onto Noting Cards or into Jotting Books The procedure is to locate a capsule statement that summarizes, that turns the phrase well, or that strikes the fancy Only these words are copied with appropriate quotation marks

One of the advantages of stress on search for quotable quotes as part of the information gathering task is that children learn early that information gathering does not involve extensive copying of materials read or heard Only a few key words are copied, enclosed within quotation marks Other points are noted in summary lines, charts, or tables A second advantage is that students involved in finding quotable quotes discover how imperative it is to jot down the source of the quote the person the book, the article, the tv show In so doing upper graders are on their way toward learning about bibliographic citations, they begin to acquire the conventions of citing conventions such as underlining the name of a book, magazine, or newspaper, enclosing article titles within quotation marks, and jotting down the date To encourage complete note taking classroom reporters are asked the who, where, and when questions Who said that? Where did you find that said? When was it said?

**Taping, Photographing, and Sketching** One superintendent reports that the piece of equipment most requested by teachers in his district is the cassette tape recorder The probable reason for the increasing popularity of tape recorders in schools is the variety of ways recorders can be employed in language programs In an up-to-date communications oriented language program the tape recorder can serve as an information gathering device, almost as important as Noting Card and Jotting Book The recorder goes along on class outings and individual information gathering excursions not only to record interview material and sounds heard at sites visited but also to record oral notes dictated into

Key search words include  
Who What Where How  
When Why and Which

it by young reporters. For instance, instead of listing on paper items of litter discovered on a Litter Walk, an observer-reporter might itemize on tape "There is a discarded rubber tire on the edge of the road, several gum wrappers, two pieces of foil." Later reporters listen to their tapes, tabulating the information and summarizing so they can perceive generalizations to present to classmates. In like manner the tape recorder can store oral notes based on ideas encountered in print. After reading several paragraphs from a magazine or a reference book, the reporter summarizes what he/she has read, talking directly into the recorder. Later the reporter reviews the tape to select points to share with others. Some students find it less time consuming to record read ing notes on tape rather than on paper.

Today with the advent of the relatively inexpensive Polaroid camera, cameras are being used as information collecting devices in much the same way as are tape recorders. The camera records evidences of air and water pollution, of human littering, of plant and animal relationships, of architectural change, of urban sprawl of highway congestion. This evidence is shared as part of a group project presentation on society-related topics. Where cameras are not available or are not allowed, reporters make sketches much in the manner of the courtroom reporter who is not permitted to photograph the scene. Under these conditions sketching becomes an information gathering technique on a par with noting, quoting, taping and photographing.

The previous examples provide a clue to the most appropriate contexts for developing information gathering skills with elementary school youngsters. The ongoing programs in social and natural sciences offer young people limitless opportunities to search out information for oral sharing. Particularly in programs that focus on relevant problems of living today, young people must be involved in collecting and processing data through noting, quoting, taping, filming, and sketching. And obviously the next step is to report findings to others for in-depth consideration. In this respect experiences in oral language should correlate closely with experiences in the social and natural sciences and lead into writing.

**Selecting and Organizing Tasks** Children need assistance in selecting information and organizing it for sharing. The task is a bifocal one. First, children are involved in thinking processes that are an inherent part of preparing facts and ideas for sharing processes such as selecting, summarizing, and ordering ideas. Second, students are involved in constructional processes, they must select visuals that help communicate the messages they will share and actually construct visuals deemed essential.

**Selecting and Summarizing** Students gathering information for sharing must be selective, they do not share every item read or heard but only relevant and important portions. To acquire skill in selective thinking children should engage in identification of significant points read in articles. For example, youngsters who have read the same article in a weekly classroom newspaper think "What is the main point?"



Weekly periodicals  
 From Scholastic  
 Magazines Inc.  
 News Plot—grade 1  
 News Ranger—grade 2  
 News Trails—grade 3  
 News Explorer—grade 4  
 Young Citizen—grade 5  
 Newt me—grades 5  
 and 6  
 From American Education  
 Publications  
 Picture Reader—grade 1  
 News Reader—grade 2  
 News Story—grade 3  
 News Parade—grade 4  
 News Report—grade 5  
 Senior Weekly  
 Reader—grade 6

Together they ferret out the main idea to state orally and succinctly. Eventually small groups of students read one article, later sharing key points with group members and perhaps adding a quotable quote to support the points. They do the same with paragraphs from basic references such as encyclopedias. Several paragraphs from an encyclopedia article on a topic like nuts, grains, fruits — a topic being investigated concurrently in social studies — can be placed in a Reading for Essentials Station. Individually youngsters scan the paragraph and record on a card a single sentence communicating the main idea. Follow-up discussions that focus on linguistic and organizational clues help the reader identify main ideas in a paragraph read.

Brevity is prime in classroom reporting, a brevity achieved through elimination of unrelated or insignificant facts and through summarizing key points. Ways to assist children in summarizing clearly and succinctly include:

- 1 **News Story Headlines** Clip short articles from newspapers minus the accompanying headlines. Young people in two or three person sum-up teams study an article, determine the main idea, and translate it into an original headline to share with the class.
- 2 **View the Point** After an informational film viewing, ask students to sum up the main point by writing no more than one or two sentences on a Noting Card and by listing on the reverse side two or three key facts that they believe would be useful in explaining the film to nonviewers. Follow with class talk about clues to main ideas and important facts. Have children compare the key facts selected by different viewers. Parallel this class activity with an assignment to sum up the major idea of a tv documentary viewed at home to be shared with the class the next day.
- 3 **Sum the Session** After social science discussion in upper grades, ask students to summarize orally some of the key points developed in the discussion.
- 4 **Caldecott Book Annotations** Collect a boxful of Caldecott Award winning books in a corner learning station. Upper graders select a book, read it quickly, and summarize its story in a brief one or two sentence annotation. Suggest that each young person working at the Book Annotation Station select a different book from the box to annotate and that each adhere to the same form: author, title, publisher, date, summary statement. Compile an alphabetically ordered annotated bibliography from the individual items.
- 5 **More Annotations** Once upper graders become skilled at writing brief summary annotations based on simple picture books, encourage them to apply their growing skill to more sophisticated books they are reading. Young people share their annotations orally during Daily Reporting Time and later post completed annotations on a bulletin board where others can review them before selecting a book for reading.

**Ordering Ideas for Sharing** As upper graders begin to share more complex thoughts, logical sequencing assumes greater importance. Students can achieve an orderly progression of ideas especially in panel presentations by preparing a sharing outline of topics to be considered.



This outline serves as notes for panel participants and as a listening guide for others. Speaking/listening outlines can take the form of a large printed chart displayed prominently during the sharing or a listing of topics written on the chalkboard. Outlines can be printed on an acetate sheet to be projected with an overhead projector or can be printed on a duplicating master to be reproduced so everyone has a listening guide on which to write comments. Refer to speaking/listening guides as discussion agenda.

While children in groups are preparing information for reporting the teacher can pose questions that ask them to think through fundamental relationships: 1 Which facts and ideas are related? 2 Which facts and ideas should be reported back to back? 3 Which ideas would have greatest impact if presented first? 4 How will we pull ideas together at the close? Young people should develop an outline style to meet the needs of topic and situation. That outline for beginners may be a simple listing of topics in logical order and need not be replete with Roman numerals, numbers, and letters.

**Preparing Visuals** In presenting informational content, students can share by referring to a wide range of visuals:

- timelines on which they have plotted key happenings chronologically
- homemade maps on which they have plotted related locations
- flow charts on which they have noted key steps in a process being described
- graphs, charts, and tables

A teacher should encourage the use of visuals because they not only hold listener attention but serve as organizing notes for the speaker. Furthermore, through organizing information for presentation on charts, graphs, and so forth, young people are acquiring skill in communicating ideas visually.

As one circulates among groups preparing to present informational content to the class, a prominent question to ask is: What kinds of visuals will you need to get your points across? Children think too about the best form for presenting their timelines, maps, charts, graphs, and tables. These visuals can be printed on strips of paper to be displayed progressively upon a flannelboard or upon the chalkboard, held there by tiny magnets. Or visuals can be drawn on acetate sheets to be displayed with the assistance of an overhead projector. The opaque projector can similarly be used to project flat maps, charts, and graphs during informational sharing.

Part of instruction in presenting information needs to focus specifically on selection and preparation of visual aids to communication. For example, in concert, children can plot a day's classroom events on a timeline, and they can rough out flow charts showing steps in processes they have completed together. Later on, working at a Visuals Preparation Station, students can try some of these projects:

- drawing up a time line of significant events in their own life or in the history of their country
- sketching a map of their home

- sketching a map of their neighborhood,
- sketching an imaginary map of fantasyland replete with Mother Goose or fairy tale locations,
- roughing out a flow chart that tells how to do something they commonly do how to make a bed, tie shoes, prepare instant oatmeal

Later in an informal talk-time, children share thoughts and visuals developing conclusions about kinds of information best shown on map, timeline, and flow chart

An actual object, model, and/or picture can aid in communicating a message orally. Presentations that lend themselves easily to use of firsthand materials are

- 1 *Show and Tell* Primary children bring in some object to tell about as they show. Generally youngsters are eager to participate in this kind of sharing, which can be included as part of a Daily Reporting Time. On other occasions, schedule an *I Was There Time*, children report on things that they have observed or that have happened to them.
- 2 *Demonstrate and Elaborate* According to Dorothy Nelson, writing in the February 1976 issue of *Language Arts*, the traditional show and tell of the primary grades can be converted into a more sophisticated enterprise called "D and E" demonstrate and elaborate, that is applicable through junior high school. Emphasis is on demonstrating rather than on displaying, with young people electing to demonstrate activities such as how to hold a skiing pole and turn on skis, how to hold a ping-pong paddle, how to do magic tricks. Some children bring in pictures they or their parents have taken, food samples they have prepared, musical instruments they play. Others bring in games, marionettes, lucky coins. And hand in hand with demonstration is a verbal explanation of why it is lucky, how it works, how it is played.
- 3 *Explaining How It Works* A specific D and E task is to find out how a particular object is made or how it functions and to explain the process using an actual part to demonstrate. Kinds of objects to explain include things like a light bulb, carburetor, automobile piston, bottle opener, phonograph record, jack, faucet, lid remover, screwdriver.
- 4 *The World in Our Hands* A globe that can be taken from a cradle in which it rests is a fine visual for sharing geographical information. As children explain, they hold the "world in their hands," pointing to specific locations. Commercial wall maps can be used in similar fashion with presenters indicating routes followed by explorers, wind and ocean currents, cities, rivers, mountain ranges by gesturing with a pointer.
- 5 *Picturing It* In describing social and natural phenomena, a picture is often worth a thousand words, as the saying goes. Ask young children to share pictures they have found as they talk about unusual plants and animals, occupations, peoples of different lands, geographical features. Speakers hold up pictures from encyclopedias, atlases, and colorful magazines such as *National Geographic*, or they distribute sketches they have made from originals. Invite

young people preparing for informational sharing to search the school's filmstrip collection for possible strips to show rather than your selecting and showing the filmstrip young people take the initiative

- 6 *The World in a Box* Students preparing informational material may want to construct a model that clarifies points to be made. One form model making can take is the diorama. The *World in a Box*. To give an impression of what life was like in ancient Ephesus in an American Indian village in a Western frontier town students place scenery and objects they have sketched and built in a box that has just five sides. Boxes can vary in size from the typical shoe box to a large carton into which youngsters can crawl.

**Presentational Tasks** Students sharing informational content with others are involved in a number of presentational tasks in addition to the information gathering selecting and organizing tasks already described. One of the primary presenting tasks is employing both voice and body so that the message is communicated in an interesting and forceful way. A second task is to draw upon words and actions that meet standards of polite interaction.

**Communicating Nonverbally** Arranging a classroom so its design facilitates communication invites interesting and forceful student presentations. This means that a presenter need not share by standing alone in front of the class; it means that he/she selects a comfortable position that fits the message and makes possible the sharing of related visuals. Perching on a high stool sitting on a swivel chair standing next to a projector even perching on a desk top are all positions a presenter can assume. Listeners may sit in groupings or in a circle on the floor or in chairs as the situation requires.

Gesturing and movement are encouraged through the use of visuals as previously described. The student who uses a timeline to show events in the life of Hans Christian Andersen will probably end up by pointing to each entry on the line; the student who works from a map will point to locations important to Andersen's life. Pointing moving toward leaning toward holding up turning about are all nonverbal communication elements necessary when a speaker incorporates a visual into his/her presentation; these gestures add action and force to a presentation.

The voice plays a major role in holding listener attention. Young people need opportunity to experiment with variations in speed tone pitch and loudness while working with informational content. Probably the best way for students to experiment with these basic components of vocal communication is in preparation to record on tape an oral presentation. This is an especially good technique if the presentation is a team endeavor for group members can listen to themselves in playback and not only study their vocal expression to determine ways of improving it but also study the overall organization of their program. The recording becomes a dress rehearsal — a rehearsal done in adjacent hallway space or in a library corner.



Activities to develop vocal expressiveness  
1. Develop the dictionary with great feeling.  
2. Orally read the sports page as if you are Howard Cosell.  
3. Develop the speaking words as if you are a gossip reporter on TV.

Instead of pre-presentational taping, students may record a sharing session in progress. A young person individually reviews the tape at some later time, focusing on vocal expressiveness. Each student listens to his/her voice with the aid of a self-analysis guide that includes questions such as

- 1 How often do I change the speed of my voice?
- 2 What messages do I send through changes in my speaking speed?
- 3 Do I vary loudness from time to time? What messages do I send through changes in loudness?
- 4 Is my voice generally too loud? too soft?
- 5 Is my voice generally too high pitched? too low pitched?
- 6 What feelings am I communicating through my voice?
- 7 Do I have any speech mannerisms that may annoy listeners? Do I make any "ah" or "uh" sounds?
- 8 Generally is my voice interesting?

The student jots remarks on the guide, places it in a "personal only" file, and reuses it during other tapings to judge individual progress. At some point a student may share his/her self-analyses with the teacher so that together they can map out areas that show remarkable growth and others that still require work. Such analytical self-study should be done on a one-to-one basis and not immediately after a presentation in front of classmates. Comments made after a presentation should be general and point out positive aspects of the contribution.

If school or community owns video taping equipment, an excellent use to which it can be put is videotaping of presentations for follow-up self-study. Each student views his/her contribution to a program and, working from an expanded guide that includes questions about components of body language, describes characteristics of his/her non-verbal performance. Often on a videotape recording, young people will pick out their own problem areas and without prompting attempt improvement in these during future sharing sessions.

*Communicating Courteously* Without a doubt one important aspect of oral communication is courtesy to others. Without a doubt too, it is one of the most difficult to teach. Displaying a chart with items like "Remember to say thank you," "Do not interrupt another speaker," "Always be thoughtful of others," and/or "Wait your turn" will probably result in few behavioral changes, since behavior in this case is bound up in one's value system. How then does one teach the conventions of courteous communication?

One begins by adhering to the conventions oneself. As Lorraine Wilkening, a remarkable kindergarten teacher, chats with pupils and guides their interaction, she is a model of courtesy. When she has to stop in mid-conversation to handle an office communication, she halts with "Excuse me, please, for just a moment." After youngsters sing a song to her delight, she remarks, "Thank you very much." And when she sees that one child does not have sufficient space, she suggests "Tracy really doesn't have enough room. Let's move down to give her room." More directly she explains the purposes of social conventions as the need arises in the group interaction. It is really not fair to tell the answers when it isn't your turn. It means that you get more than

one turn " Later she commends, ' I like the way you all gave Steve a chance to answer Thank you " Through constant reliance on polite forms of communication, Ms Wilkening is making courtesy an integral part of her classroom environment And her method works! In return the little ones pepper their conversation with thank-yous, excuse mes, your welcomes, modeling their talk after the teacher whom they respect and who respects them

Modeling their behavior after the teacher s, youngsters can learn to handle some of the ordinary social amenities Many teachers normally take the time to introduce to the students a person dropping in to visit the classroom saying simply, "Boys and girls, I would like to introduce Mrs Lovel to you She is Marcia's mother and has come to enjoy some of the things we are doing " The children respond with a ' Good morning ' or "Good afternoon ' Upon leaving, the visitor contributes a "Goodbye" and students respond in turn Once the protocol for introductions has been established through actual situations like this, children can begin to introduce When a parent drops by, the child can introduce him/her to classmates Or a youngster can become Class Greeter for the week, welcoming all classroom visitors and introducing them to the others

Whenever a group is engaged in a classroom presentation, social amenities are part of it One student serves as general announcer, introducing each participant and closing the session with some thank-yous The announcer also begins appropriate applause to end each selection on the program By the same token, when an outside speaker visits the class, one student should serve as host and announcer The host first chats with the speaker to find out some interesting fact to include in the introduction, he/she then introduces the speaker and expresses a thank-you at the end

Some introductions may be taught directly through roleplaying Children experiment, for example, with ways to introduce their parents to a friend or to a teacher They learn to introduce themselves to an adult to whom they want to speak, to someone with whom they want to make friends, to people they know but whose names they have forgotten To start the roleplaying, a teacher places problem situations on slips of paper A young person selects a slip at random, then chooses players from the group to perform with him/her and runs through the introduction Other kinds of situations for roleplaying include interrupting politely when it is absolutely necessary, telling someone an embarrassing fact like "your slip is showing," correcting someone who has made an error, apologizing for a faux pas taking a message or introducing oneself on the telephone

### Formats for Sharing Information

Major formats for sharing information and ideas include the interview, the panel report/discussion, the debate, and the individual report/announcement Consider next the ways each of these can be adapted and varied for use in the elementary classroom

**The Interview.** In an interview a student host can ask interviewees for information and/or opinions on current events, historical happenings, or events in their own lives, much in the manner of tv talk shows pop-



Books on courtesy for younger children  
Gelett Burgess *Goops and How to Be Them* (New York: Dover 1968) and *More Goops and How Not to Be Them* (New York: Dover 1968)  
Edith Hurd *Hurry Hurry* (New York: Harper & Row 1960)

Jo McCormick *Etti Cat! The Courtesy Cat* (New York: Hastings 1965)  
Sesyle Joslin *What Do You Say, Dear* (Reading Mass: Addison Wesley 1958)  
Louis Stobodkin *Thank You You're Welcome* (New York: Vanguard 1957)

Student writers can compose their own Etiquette books following the patterns established in these



Books on courtesy for older readers  
Betty Allen *Mind Your Manners* (Philadelphia: Lippincott 1971)  
Jeanne Bendick *What to Do* (New York: McGraw Hill 1967)  
Helen Hoke *First Book of Etiquette* (New York: Watts 1970)

ular today Interviewees on a classroom talk show can speak for themselves or assume the identities of well-known personalities of the present, the past the fanciful On other occasions, classroom presentations can be modeled after the design of "Meet the Press," with a panel of hosts posing questions to a single interviewee, this is the format for sharing that the group met earlier in the chapter adapted in their interview with Hans Christian Andersen Whether the interview is in the format of tv talk shows or of "Meet the Press," however, it can be built into ongoing learning experiences

Hosts prepare for a 'program' by drawing up a preliminary opinionnaire, a series of questions to start the interview In order to ask the "right" questions and cover the topic adequately, hosts must study in some depth In like manner, interviewees should be aware of the preliminary questions before the session begins, so that they have thought through and have gathered information to support opinions The preliminary questions, on the other hand, are just that — openers Young people presenting in interview style may pose other questions and consider other related topics that surface naturally in the give-and-take atmosphere of an interview

The mock interview in which hosts and/or guests assume identities different from their own is an excellent format for considering historical as well as current political and social events Interviews can be set up as radio or even tv programs, replete with periodic commercials written and announced by students If audio-taped, the programs can be shared with other classes where the tapes serve as listening station material A major advantage of the simulated interview is that shared facts literally come to life, seeming more personal and less remote Participants achieve a feeling of 'you are there' A second advantage is that courtesy is being learned through direct participation There is need for introductions, greetings and thank-yous, both hosts and guests must wait their turn in asking and answering questions Thirdly, since the mock interview has elements of Let's Pretend and drama students see that in presenting information, expressiveness in voice and body is essential The chart on the next page supplies examples of single personalities or groups whom students can become as part of social studies current events, and literature study

**The Panel** Generally in a panel presentation each participant presents some information on one aspect of a larger topic In some instances after reports by panelists, there is discussion among the members about points developed during the reporting phase perhaps followed by a period when listeners pose questions and offer opinions Panel discussions are structured informally, with a student moderator indicating the order of participation

Upper grade students investigating areas within the social and natural sciences as well as current event topics may find the panel format one easy to adapt to their needs as they go on to present the results of their investigations to others in the class One advantage of the investigating presenting team approach to subject content is that young people must work together to ferret out information and in planning their panel reports through their work together they acquire small

## Ideas for Mock Interviews

|                                            | A single guest can become                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Several guests can become                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Personalities from the present</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a present-day political candidate</li> <li>• a citizen from a country being studied in class</li> <li>• the president of the U.S.</li> <li>• the president's spouse</li> <li>• the governor of the state</li> <li>• a well known TV performer</li> <li>• a well known sports figure</li> <li>• a popular rock star or comedian</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• candidates for the same office</li> <li>• members of the Supreme Court</li> <li>• members of a popular sports team</li> <li>• members of the state legislature</li> <li>• all the actors from one TV show</li> </ul> |
| <b>Personalities from the past</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abraham Lincoln or any former president of the U.S.</li> <li>• Marie Curie</li> <li>• Steven Foster</li> <li>• King George III</li> <li>• Noah Webster</li> <li>• Booker T. Washington</li> <li>• Florence Nightingale</li> <li>• Columbus or any other explorer</li> <li>• Edward Jenner</li> <li>• Grandma Moses</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a group of explorers or immigrants</li> <li>• a group of suffragettes</li> <li>• members of the first Continental Congress</li> <li>• some soldiers at Valley Forge, Gettysburg or the Alamo</li> </ul>              |
| <b>Personalities from legend and story</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alice in Wonderland</li> <li>• Dorothy in Oz</li> <li>• St. Nicholas</li> <li>• a character from any book read</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Seven Dwarfs</li> <li>• characters from a particular tale or fairy tale</li> <li>• a group of Mother Goose characters</li> </ul>                                                                                 |

group interaction skills as well as search skills. A second advantage is that several students investigating a topic must subdivide it into smaller units so that each member can focus his/her attention on one unit. In so doing, young people learn to identify manageable subdivisions. Third, students have opportunity to try out on their colleagues in the group ideas about content and about ways of presenting that content visually. Others supply feedback so that final presentations are forceful and interesting. Fourth, students presenting as part of a panel support one another, no one has the feeling of standing alone as did the cheese in the familiar old rhyme.

Serving on a panel, younger students can share books they have read. Each panel member simply retells an episode. The audience can tribute questions following the initial presentations. Similarly, younger students can sit as a panel to share their impressions of a common experience — an exciting event witnessed at a program viewed, a trip taken together. At first, a teacher may have to moderate panel presentations in primary classes so that children develop an understanding of the moderator's role in introducing the topic, intro-

ducing each panelist, calling on questioners, and thanking panelists. Shortly, however, students can assume the role of moderator, modeling their activity after their teacher's.

**The Debate** The debate is a more formal format for sharing points of view on an issue. Generally two teams present alternately, each on one side of the issue under consideration. Following initial presentations by each participant, there is a rebuttal period in which one debater from each side sums up or attacks points presented by the opposing side. In contrast to panel presentation, in which participants may sit informally in a semicircle, debaters typically stand up behind a support that holds Noting Cards.

Because the debate is rather highly structured and competitive, its applicability is limited in elementary school, yet students in sixth grade and above may enjoy experimenting with the format, especially when considering issues of a controversial nature. During political campaigns, periods of concern about state, national, and world events, times when controversial issues surface in school or community, upper graders can identify topics for debate, divide into pro and con teams, develop short presentations, and deliver them in debating style. Rebuttal is extemporaneous, giving young people opportunity to try their wings at speaking with only general knowledge of the subject to guide their remarks.

**The Individual Report** In contrast to the debate, the individual report has wide applicability at all grade levels. One form of reporting is the short announcement in which a child very briefly, and generally without much preparation, tells about a coming event. At the opposite end of the reporting continuum is the investigative report in which a person shares information acquired through considerable study and presents with the aid of prepared visuals. Show-and-Tell and Demonstrate-and-Elaborate described previously are other forms of individual reporting, as is the monolog in which a youngster assumes the identity of a personality of past, present, or fiction and explains happenings from that person's point of view. Children doing monologs may want to don simple costumes to get the feel of the people whose identity they are assuming. For example, a pair of glasses pulled down on the nose can turn a reporter into a Benjamin Franklin who shares his thoughts on the Revolutionary War. Hair pulled back can turn another student into a George Washington, who explains what it was like to be first president of the country. An old oil lamp held in hand transforms another monologist into a Florence Nightingale who tells of her experiences in the Crimean War.

These last examples suggest that reporting need not be so frightening as schools have sometimes made it in the past. A teacher puts young reporters at their ease by establishing an informal, nonevaluative atmosphere for individual sharing. External evaluation is kept out of the reporting environment. To ask listeners to criticize a presentation after it has been made is to take the pleasure out of the process and introduce fear. To keep marking book open and write down a



Topics for reporting  
Personalities in the  
News

"It Happened 100 (50-25)  
10) Years Ago Today"  
Elect on Update"

"And the Winner Was!"  
"Personalities from the  
Past"

"I Met \_\_\_\_\_"

"I Visited \_\_\_\_\_"

"Now My Opinion Is  
\_\_\_\_\_"

"A Discovery that  
Changed the World"  
"An Event that Changed  
History"



grade at the close of a report will probably add to uneasiness. Self-analysis can take the place of external evaluation. Students who have shared orally can later take time to complete a self-study sheet. It can be a duplicated one on which youngsters first record "The Name of the Presentation" and then list "Things I Did Really Well" and "Things I Need to Work On." If these three headings are repeated, allowing sufficient space for student notations under each one, the self-study sheet can be cumulative, with students recording on different occasions and gradually gaining a concept of areas on which they need to work.

### **Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills**

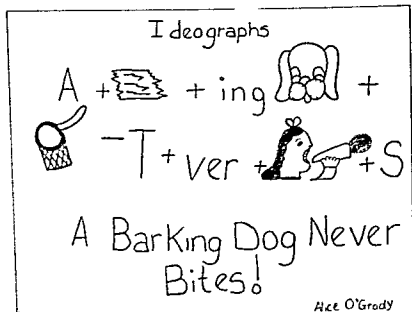
- Devise an original format for student sharing of information that you believe would be successful in a primary classroom. Devise a variation on that format that would be workable in upper elementary classrooms. If possible, test the formats with children.
- Experiment with making transparencies for use with the overhead projector. Find an easy way that students can make transparencies serve as visuals during panel or individual reporting.
- Learn something about a personality from history, locate a prop associated with that personality, and then assume his/her identity, presenting a monolog in front of a group. Try to locate an upper elementary group for your audience, so that your monolog serves as a model for later student presentations.
- Identify one classroom situation in which your behavior can serve as a model through which youngsters acquire understanding of how to handle the social amenities. Do not use an example already cited in this book.

### **Sharing Stories, Poems, Humor, and Information:**

#### **A Summary Thought or Two**

The sixth graders in Charlene Bergmann's class translated familiar expressions into ideographs — written communications in which part of the message is sent through pictures. After all had completed an expression, sixth graders took turns sharing their ideographs as classmates attempted to decipher the message. One young person, serving as master of ceremonies, hosted the sharing session. Fifth graders in Winifred Tripp's class played with puns. Everyone wrote an original pun, working from a list of homonyms and homographs supplied by their teacher. Later during humor break, the students shared their puns orally, and then they went on to compile a book of puns entitled "Jests for Pun" — the title coming from the book of that name by Bil Keane. In George Radon's third grade, students in groups were collecting data on the litter build-up in front of the school as part of science study. On several successive days, groups had been snapping

Ideograph



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pictures of the litter accumulation. Later as groups shared and compared findings they exhibited their original pictures with the aid of an opaque projector.

Charlene Bergmann, Winifred Tripp, and George Radon know that oral presentational skills do not develop through participation in an occasional assembly program. They know that skills are acquired through continued and active sharing. In their classrooms, oral sharing is a daily, even an hourly occurrence. Sharing takes place as part of the total language program. Students share ideas they have read and organized, they spontaneously share what they have written, and they write and read as follow-up to the sharing activity. In their classrooms, too, oral sharing occurs in a variety of formats as children participate in choral speaking activity, pantomimes, puppet shows, playlets, humor breaks, discussions, interviews, reportings, and as they entertain and teach one another. As a result of such active involvement in the communication process, young people grow in oral sharing skills, develop a positive attitude toward presentational activity, and expand their vocabulary by listening and speaking together.

#### References

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# Thinking, talking, and writing together —drawing a muchness

The Dormouse had closed its eyes by this time and was going off into a doze, but, on being pinched by the Hatter, it woke up again with a little shock and went on:—"that begins with an M—such as mouse-traps—and the moon—and memory—and muchness—you know you say things are—much of a muchness—did you ever see such a thing as a drawing of a muchness?"

Really now you ask me," said Alice, very much confused, "I don't think—" "then you should like," said the Hatter,

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

A group of fifth graders watched snow falling outside their classroom window. They talked together and then wrote

Snow —  
soft white snow  
floating through the breeze  
covering the earth like a warm blanket  
and crying out —  
I've come to share  
the holidays with you

Just before a holiday another class, this time third graders, chatted about what they would be doing during vacation. After considerable thinking and conversing together, each contributed a sentence strip to a class composite story.

This vacation —  
I am going to play a lot of games  
I am going to go swimming  
I am going to Italy and I will meet my grandmother and father  
I am going to my grandmother's house and I will be playing with my stuff

At Christmas a group of sixth graders talked about things they associated with that holiday. They listed their associations on a chart (see next page). After they had talked and brainstormed together, the children by themselves or in small groups composed a Christmas Thought. Jennifer Gibson, a student, drew words from the brainstormed list to write

## My Christmas Thought

Christmas is red and green wreaths hanging in the doorway  
glorious angels smiling warmly at you from the  
nativity  
sipping eggnog slowly — thinking, thinking of the  
times ahead  
listening to the fire crackling, making reflections  
on the silver tinsel  
Christmas — a time of rejoicing!

## Christmas Time Words We Like

| Object Words |          |           | Action Words |       |         | Describing Words |           |         |
|--------------|----------|-----------|--------------|-------|---------|------------------|-----------|---------|
| bells        | candies  | wreaths   | eat          | ring  | sing    | bright           | shiny     | smooth  |
| lights       | tinsel   | ornaments | play         | pray  | rejoice | red              | and green |         |
| snow         | carols   | fir trees | open         | hang  | write   | curious          | glorious  |         |
| holly        | winter   | gifts     | think        | thank | " give  | happy            | delicious |         |
| cookies      | eggnog   | turkey    | receive      |       |         | snapping         | crackling | popping |
| Santa        | Rudolph  | reindeers | touch        |       |         | pretty           | warm      | silvery |
| days         | nativity | peace     | see          |       |         | loving           | friendly  |         |
| stars        | night    |           |              |       |         |                  |           |         |

In yet another class a group of second graders each in turn reached into one of a series of paper bags into which their teacher had placed simple household or classroom objects like a key toothbrush piece of chalk pencil comb, Q-tip, spoon handkerchief ruler. As each touched an object in a bag he/she described it as others guessed from the description what the object might be. Beth described in this way

It is square on one end and has a little hole. The other end is long and pointed. One side is just a little bumpy. The other side is groovy like a lion's teeth. It is small and feels like metal. It is very cold.

Can you guess the object Beth was describing? Her classmates could not.

After describing and guessing the second graders gathered to record the steps they had just performed. Guided by teacher questions such as "What did we do?" "How did some things feel?" they dictated.

### *Feel and Guess*

We put our hands inside bags. We described what we felt. We described soft things and hard things. heavy things and light things. Some were smooth and some were bumpy. We had lots of fun.

Only after completing their activity chart did the children add their title, *Feel and Guess* — a title that summed up what they had enjoyed about the experience.

In a different school fourth graders felt and looked at an old boot and a brand new, shiny one their teacher was displaying. They talked together about where the old boot might have gone, what the old boot might have seen, and even how the old boot probably felt — if it could. Children contributed their ideas. The old boot might have been to Alaska and felt the cold winter. The old boot might have hiked across the country and seen valleys, mountains, and rivers. The old

boot might have been to Vietnam and seen war Together children considered in similar fashion where the new boot might go what it might see how it might feel The new boot might go down into a coal mine to see coal being dug out The new boot might go to the top of Mount Everest The new boot might go out to sea on an oil tanker and travel around the world The fourth graders supplied New Shoe Words Old Shoe Words and Action Words checking the thesaurus for vivid descriptors

#### New Shoe Words

#### Old Shoe Words

#### Shoe Actions

|             |         |         |          |           |          |
|-------------|---------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
| chilly      | clean   | worn    | torn     | ran       | jumped   |
| leathery    | soft    | muddy   | smelly   | hopped    | climbed  |
| warm        | big     | rippled | tired    | paced     | samped   |
| brown       | labeled | dirty   | hoey     | waded     | kicked   |
| ready to go |         | ugly    | horrible | sauntered | loitered |
|             |         | ancient |          | strode    |          |

Later the children went to a learning station in groups of two to write words and sentences about an old slipper a new sandal a wooden shoe a Mexican huarache a silver evening slipper a worn sneaker—all displayed there What they composed in pairs they eventually shared with a larger talk group

In the five classrooms just described children are continually engaged in cooperative thinking talking and writing Their teachers rely on both time proven and innovative techniques to encourage them to think about and express ideas In this chapter these techniques for involving elementary students in active communication will be clarified

### Experiencing Together

Karen Donovan took her first graders to visit a local farm where they saw cows goats horses and pigs As the youngsters spied each animal they stopped to talk about it What is the animal doing? What words can we use to talk about it? What do we like about it? were questions that the teacher asked to prompt the children to think about what they were seeing The children pointed and exclaimed Look at the goat It is on the roof of the house! Look at the chickens They are fighting!

Excitement and interest were high as the children walked around and it remained so as the first graders returned to their classroom Children without prompting volunteered things they had seen and described specific animals they liked There was much talk starting with Did you see? as children asked others if they had noticed this or that Relying on the children's enjoyment of the trip Ms Donovan clustered her first graders around the recording easel on which she had mounted a large piece of experience story charting paper Let's write about one animal we liked best We'll start by listing the names of all the animals we liked

As the children dictated animal names Karen Donovan recorded the words on individual cards placing them on the floor in a central area so that children could clearly see the names. At that point she asked Raymond, a student, to select the card naming the animal he liked best. He picked The Brown and Black Horse. Children who also liked the horse best raised their hands. The youngsters did this for each animal listed in the process registering their vote for the best liked animal. The winner was Billy Goat, most children had been fascinated by the goat and the way he sat on the roof of his house.

Before beginning to compose the children talked about the goat, most contributed an idea to the brief discussion. Then four children volunteered specific reasons for liking Billy. Each dictated a line containing information from the discussion as the teacher recorded the lines on the story paper.

### Billy

The billy goat is cute. He has a long beard. His legs are long and skinny. He has a big belly. He looks funny sitting on the roof of his house. He might get hurt if the roof didn't have those bumps.

When the story had been printed out the teacher asked the children to entitle it. Youngsters volunteered suggestions which were listed on cards. They gave reasons to support the title they liked best. The one chosen by vote after much discussion was just Billy.

The teacher encouraged the children to read back the story to the class. Students came to the easel to read aloud a line indicating the left to right direction of their reading by following the words with their fingers. Almost all the children had a chance to read.

As children pursued personalized study the next day the teacher and an aide worked with individual children talking and writing about other animals seen on their farm excursion. Raymond dictated lines about his favorite horse. The scribe recorded the lines on white paper that was pasted on one side of a large piece of light colored construction paper. Raymond drew his conception of the brown and black horse in the vacant space next to the writing paper. The scribes worked in this way with individual youngsters like Raymond who still needed assistance recording their ideas on paper. At times they asked dictators to print out a short story word or to add basic punctuation marks. Meanwhile some youngsters who were slightly more advanced wrote out their impressions of other well liked animals. These youngsters came to the scribes later for help in editing the two or three lines they had written on their own. Using their erasers these children removed unnecessary letters they inserted punctuation and letters previously overlooked.

When each child had completed a story page either by dictating or by writing the pages were posted around the perimeter of a bulletin board captioned "Animals We Saw and Liked." In the center of the board was mounted the large experience story chart about Billy to which the children attached a blue ribbon.

Experiencing as a Base for Talking and Writing Karen Donovan was employing a technique that many teachers of young children have suc

←  
a v ng at a g oup  
consensu

←  
summa iz ng deas n an  
o al compos on

←  
ent l ng a compos on  
based on a ma n dea

←  
making sense out of  
d c a ed wo ds

←  
compos ng o g na deas  
fo w t ng record ng deas  
on pape

cessfully used to prompt both talking about and writing about. For youngsters to express themselves with enthusiasm, they must first or simultaneously be involved in seeing and/or doing. Their firsthand experience provides the content that they want to share with others.

*Firsthand Experiences Out-of-doors* Ms. Donovan took her first graders to a farm. As other teachers before her have discovered, excursions stimulate ideas to talk and write about. Just a short walk in a nearby park or meadow can provide poetry-like impressions such as those Dena Russ dictated to her teacher after a walk in the out-of-doors.

### FALL

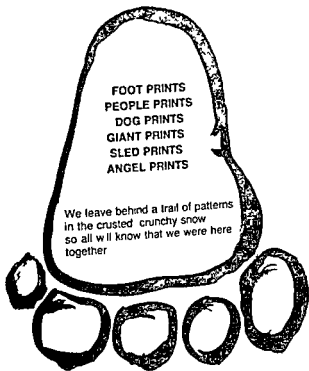
At the park I saw trees  
I saw pebbles, chestnuts, leaves  
I heard birds chirping, boys screaming, and leaves crunching  
I smelled the grass and the flowers  
I felt leaves and water  
I tasted the water. It was cold.  
I like this month.

Dena, age 6½

As Dena's description of her walk to the park suggests, excursions need not be complex or costly to trigger ideas to talk and write about. For example, on a day when a layer of new snow covers the ground, youngsters can bundle up and go out to build a snowman, make foot print trails in the snow, shake snow from tree branches and watch it tumble to the ground, draw pictures in the snow with a twig. Before venturing forth, a teacher may wish to share some "snow thoughts" with primary youngsters, a story such as Ezra Jack Keats' *The Snowy Day* or a tiny snow thought like the piece "Snow Trail," printed on a piece of charting paper (see next page). On returning to the warmth of the classroom, children will be ready to talk about things seen and felt. Older students may even be able to contrast the cold of the out-of-doors with the warmth of the indoors and write pairs of alternating lines, for instance, a line beginning "Out-of-doors" alternates with a line beginning "Indoors."

In rural and some suburban areas where there is still open space, children can walk through newly plowed fields, through woods filled with crackly fall leaves, through a grove of bushes or trees heavy with fruit, across desert sands, by a brook where water striders, mayfly larvae, and a snail or two are at home, they capitalize on whatever nature has to offer in the area. Children may see birds, insects, worms, perhaps even a lizard or a box turtle. On nature walks the teacher can introduce children to the slimy feel of algal strands or to the prickly feel of palm fronds, to the lingering smell of pine, to the distinctive taste of mint. The fauna and flora that are all about offer a wealth of sense impressions for verbalizing during talk-times — a wealth so great that children can hardly wait to tell what they have experienced. Remember the first time you slipped over a rock and saw an earthworm wiggle itself quickly away? Or the first time you spied a wood

For more ideas see  
Dorothy Hennings and  
Barbara Grant Corbett  
and Craft: *Written  
Expression in the  
Elementary School*  
(Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:  
Prentice-Hall, 1973) ch. 3



pecker with its bright red, cocky hat? Recall your own feelings  
Children filled with similar ones oftentimes bubble over with  
excitement

In urban areas the environment offers a multitude of different experiences that are the "stuff" of talking and writing. As sidewalk engineers, children can "direct" construction at a local building site. No one can dispute the thrill felt watching a construction worker stride the length of a beam stretched across empty space. Or children can walk along city streets listening for human sounds, looking for people litter, or searching for air pollution sources. Most cities abound in examples of ways people adversely affect the environment. Children can venture forth to identify examples to discuss upon returning to their classroom.

**Structured Excursions** There are numbers of places to take youngsters on more structured excursions into the local community. Here are just a few places to visit and talk about:

- shops in the community, particularly interesting spots like the bakery, the bank, the pet shop, the barber shop. Returning to the classroom, children describe things seen at each stop along the way and build a cooperative story chart that summarizes the excursion.
- a large automobile showroom. Children select their favorite automobile and defend their choices in class discussion. Determine a consensus by voting. The winning car becomes the topic for coop-



erative writing. Later children can write independently about their individual choices.

- civic buildings such as the local court, the police station, the fire house, the rescue squad building, the library. Children talk about the services contributed by an agency housed within a building and describe the place visited.
- industrial parks and large shopping complexes. On the school bus youngsters drive through these to find out what kinds of businesses are located there. Later children discuss their findings and summarize them on a chart or map.

Incidentally experiences such as these are just as appropriate for stimulating thinking and talking among older students as they are in triggering ideas for experience chart writing. Older children can gain understanding of the functioning of their community and at the same time gather information for discussion. In short, children of all ages benefit from firsthand experiences with their world.

Studying the world



**Classroom Experiences** This world includes the classroom. A sample from the environment can be introduced into the room for children to experience. Fluffy, a well loved and cared for guinea pig, is a popular resident of one kindergarten room. Each week a different kindergarten is responsible for giving Fluffy food and water. Each week too children gather to study Fluffy and talk about her reaction to food, her

appearance, and her activity during the week. A short weekly report on Fluffy's behavior is compiled on Friday.

February 3, 1978

This week Fluffy did not move around much. She just sat in a corner. Fluffy was very tired.

In a city classroom a number of miles away, Yellow Back is in residence. Yellow Back is a box turtle which roams freely about the first grade room during school hours, competing for space with two-legged residents. Periodically Yellow Back is the topic for talking and writing, especially when he crawls into a tight place and requires assistance in squirming free.

For teachers in upper grade classrooms who find it difficult to care for animals as large as Fluffy and Yellow Back, there are numbers of smaller organisms particularly good for observational study: ants in colonies, hermit crabs, land snails, earthworms, and goldfish, to name just a few. Upper graders can periodically record data about the behavior of the organisms, sharing these data with classmates during a reporting time. If children record in tabular form, they will simultaneously be learning a way of systematizing observations.

Ongoing class projects as well as real things brought into the schoolroom can become the content for talking and writing. Planting evergreen tree seedlings, for example, is a worthwhile endeavor. Upper graders plant treelets following directions provided by a commercial supplier. Groups of planters are responsible for setting out and studying the progress of several seedlings. Later, to the total class they explain problems encountered. They go on to write out a description of what they did, how a seedling appeared when first planted, and how it appeared after selected intervals following planting. In southern climates, rather than planting evergreens, children plant citrus treelets or palm seedlings. Other worthwhile nature-related projects that can stimulate talking and writing include:

- forcing bulbs in classroom flower pots,
- raising bean plants from seeds and recording data about overall plant development,
- raising cacti under differing soil/water conditions and comparing growth under each condition,
- polishing pieces of quartz or other hard pebbles in a rock mill and describing progressive changes in the pieces after predetermined intervals,
- observing growth of spider plants — hanging basket type plants that send out a spray of stems from which other plants grow. Upper graders can measure the growth of these stems, take pictures showing progressive development, and eventually report their data to the class.

Projects in other areas of the curriculum — social sciences, art, music — have similar potential through project activity; children gather data and formulate ideas to share during discussion times.

**Summary** Many of the examples suggested in the preceding section have three major components: experiencing together, talking together, and writing together. Young people require much direct involvement before talking and writing, without it they have little to express. Then too youngsters in primary grades require much preliminary talk before writing. "talking about" occupies much more time than "writing about," with the number of sentences consigned to paper even on a class experience chart being relatively small. This is especially true if class writing experiences are followed by individual copying of lines written cooperatively, by drawing original illustrations to accompany storylines, and by compiling individual copies into class experience summary folios. The process of forming letter shapes on paper is extremely time-consuming for the beginner who frequently wearies after copying down two or three lines.

Because recording ideas is a challenge for the child just learning to form letter shapes, experiencing, talking, and writing together are both pleasurable and productive introductions to the process of composing ideas on paper. Serving as scribe, the teacher facilitates the recording process, simultaneously introducing very young children to basic components of "language-written-down": thought units are comprised of individual words, words are written across the page from left to right, first letters of beginning words are written in upper case form, periods end sentences.

After youngsters have had considerable experience composing together in this fashion, they move from group talk sessions into individual dictation. A youngster works alone with a scribe who records his/her ideas on a paper to which the child adds illustrations. Since children tend to dictate only a few lines at this stage and most will be drawing illustrations while the teacher takes dictation from an individual, a scribe can record many children's ideas in a short period of time without keeping youngsters waiting too long. If, moreover, teacher aides, perhaps upper class students or parents, serve in a classroom, taking individual dictation is one task they can perform. Children who have dictated thoughts later read them to the group, displaying their original illustrations and telling a little more about their ideas. Under these instructional conditions children go beyond experiencing, talking, and writing, they follow writing with reading and more talking.

By the end of first grade many youngsters will be recording on their own. This does not mean, however, that students dispense with experiencing and talking together. As discussed in previous chapters throughout elementary school young people benefit from discussing their thoughts. Sharing information and ideas with one another they clarify and expand what they are thinking and at the same time acquire basic oral communication skills. Nor does this mean that students dispense with writing together. Again, throughout elementary school young people benefit from group writing activity. Cooperatively constructing sentences and paragraphs, upper graders learn new ways to express and organize their ideas, acquire basic writing skills and, equally important, gain security in their ability to formulate ideas.



For a discussion of oral composition as a basis for reading and writing, see Sylvia Ashton-Warner, *Teacher* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963).



Enjoy Anna Burrows, *They All Want to Write* (3rd ed.) (New York: Holt Rinehart, 1964).  
 p. 10 art. ch. 2 see also  
 Hemmings and Grant  
 Content and Craft ch. 4

Experiencing and talking before writing moreover expand a child's functional vocabulary. As youngsters talk about events experienced, they begin to use words that the teacher has casually interjected into the conversation. If children are talking about an excursion to a nearby airport, one might ask participants to describe the way airplanes take off and land on the runways. For them *runway* may be a new word they gradually learn to handle through group talk. Other words that conceivably could be interjected into this discussion are *taxied hangar, ramp, inspection, check-in counter* — all rather sophisticated words for primary age children but ones that become meaningful through experience and talk. Children may wish to make a chart of these words so that when they turn to individual writing, the words correctly spelled, are clearly visible. This technique works equally well with older children who are encountering words new to them as a result of a common experience.

**Tasting, Touching, Smelling, Seeing, Hearing** Encouraging children to think about what they are tasting, touching, smelling, seeing, and hearing is a way to heighten children's perception of an experience. By focusing on impressions being received by all the senses, children gain the detail to share through writing and talking.

**Gathering Sense Impressions** Thinking together about a recent outing Anita Toth's fourth graders ordered what they had seen, heard, smelled, and touched.

#### *Impressions of Our Outing*

We saw a tiny waterfall, a dirty yellow cat, lots of crisy leaves, a fallen tree that was decaying, rocks and stones, green moss, many birds, a rabbit's hole, sand, and dirt.

We heard noisy car engines, crackling leaves, roaring airplanes in the sky, and a loud fire engine siren.

We smelled the scent of pine as we walked along. We broke pine needles and the scent got stronger.

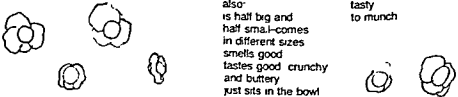
We touched rough bark, brittle leaves, and smooth rocks.

As fourth graders contributed specifics, Ms. Toth asked children for even greater detail. What kind of tree did we see? What was happening to the tree? were questions she asked of the child who suggested that they had seen a tree. As a result of the questioning, the child described the tree as fallen and decaying. In similar fashion, Ms. Toth prompted another child to describe the leaves as *crisy*, another to describe the car engines as *noisy*, still another to tell what was done to make the pine more fragrant, and yet another to contribute the word *scent*. The teacher herself contributed the word *roaring*.

By responding to guiding questions of the kind Ms. Toth was projecting, children begin to think of details. Students in Deborah Batistato's class also did just that as they enjoyed a "popcorn happening." Deborah began by sharing the lines of Nancy Byrd Turner's rhythmic poem "Popcorn Song." The poem begins, "Pop-pop pop," said the popcorn in the pan" and contains many repetitions of the pop-pop-pop line that makes it ideal for choral speaking. The children inter-

preted the lines orally and nonverbally, deciding among themselves how lines should be expressed and who should chorus which lines. When they had achieved an appealing rendition, they chorused the lines to the accompaniment of a recording of "Popcorn" by Hot Butter. Then the teacher brought out a popper filled with corn and oil, plugged it in, and waited. Soon, as kernels burst into popcorn, children were describing their impressions of what was happening in the pot. They offered "The corn is making exploding noises when it pops," "The corn is jumping up and down," "The corn is going in all different ways in the pot," "The corn is dancing a jig."

When they removed the finished corn, children thought about what it looked like. They came up with "round balls," "cotton," "a bug," "a flower." They continued by describing the corn as "white, yellow, and brown," "bumpy, curly, fluffy, and light," "half big and half small." They described the smell as "strong and good," the taste as "crunchy, buttery, and good," the feel as "hot when just done and cold sometimes also." Sitting in the bowl, the corn was "quiet." As Ms. Battialo focused children's attention on impressions they were receiving from each of their senses and children contributed words and ideas, she recorded key words on an outline chart that looked like this:

| Our Impressions of Popcorn                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What is happening in the popcorn pot?<br>The popcorn makes exploding noises in the pot. It jumps up and down. It goes in all directions in the pot. | What does the popcorn look like?<br>It looks like—<br>round balls<br>cotton flower<br>a bug, a cloud<br>circles. | How can we describe our popcorn? It—<br>is white, yellow, and brown<br>is bumpy, curly, light and fluffy.<br>feels hot when just done, cold sometimes also.<br>is half big and half small—comes in different sizes<br>smells good<br>tastes good, crunchy and buttery<br>just sits in the bowl<br>doesn't always move<br>is quiet. | Why do we pop corn?<br>We pop corn—<br>because we like it<br>because we are having a party<br>because it is delicious<br>because it is tasty<br>to munch. |
|                                                                    |                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                           |

Selecting from the words recorded on the impressions chart, Mark wrote:

#### *Homemade Popcorn*

White crinkly circles of fluffy cotton,  
Popping in the pan, make screeching noises  
They look like round balls or bumpy clouds  
Quiet among piles of other corns  
People munch on popcorns making crunchy noises  
Popcorn is a tasty treat to eat

A similar sense-based happening can emerge from making peanut butter. Children shell fresh peanuts until they collect two cups, pour

the shelled nuts into a blender, and grind until the nuts reach the consistency of butter. A teacher supervises the grinding operation because blender blades are sharp and dangerous. Children describe the smell, taste, and texture of freshly shelled nuts, explain what happens in the blender, and describe the taste of freshly prepared peanut butter spread on crackers, comparing it to the jarred variety. A logical follow-up is writing out the recipe to share with other classes.

Older students delight in more complex and tasty language adventures. A teacher may begin by reading the pleasurable episode from *Pippi Longstocking* when Pippi makes pancakes and by reading Christina Rossetti's "Mix a Pancake." Youngsters move from words to concrete experiences, making pancakes from a boxed mix to which they add only liquid ingredients. Moving from experiences to words, young chefs describe the batter, the cakes cooking on the griddle, the taste of cakes, syrup, and melting butter. They ask and think: What does the batter look like? What is its color? texture? consistency? What smells strike our noses as the cakes cook? How can we describe the bubbles that form on the top of the cooking cakes? How do we go about flipping the cakes? What words describe the taste of our finished cakes? The teacher contributes a few words to extend children's contact with language. Although some adventuresome teachers have engaged young people in making applesauce, spaghetti and sauce, and even pizza, pancakes blended from a mix are simple even for the novice and require only a portable griddle for cooking.



Share Eric Carle  
Pancakes, Pancakes  
(Westminster, Md.: Knopf,  
1970) with younger  
children.

**Some Activities** Here are some other relatively easy activities for eliciting descriptions of impressions received through one or more of the senses.

- 1 **Smell and Talk** Fruits such as lemon, pineapple, and banana exude a strong aroma when first cut or opened. Schedule a "fruit whiffing" event in which children in groups each open a simple. Children write down words to describe the aroma. Older students can check the thesaurus for more expressive words to add to their lists. On other occasions schedule a "spice or herb whiffing" (nutmeg, ginger, cinnamon, curry, thyme, mustard) or "plant whiffing" event (mint, lavender, sassafras, pine, wintergreen, geraniums, lily of the valley, carnations). An obvious time to schedule this kind of activity is within the context of a science study of plants and their unique characteristics.
- 2 **Look and Talk** Color, luster, size, shape, weight, and movement are categories for thinking about the appearance of objects, especially things like rocks, shells, leaves, and insects that children observe as part of scientific investigations. Make a columnar chart with these key words as heads (see p. 196). Children start by selecting objects from their home and/or school environment to list and describe on the charts. Later they read their descriptions while others guess what the object is. Charted information can be converted into "Guess What?" paragraphs that are placed in a learning station where students go to solve each "guess what" puzzle.

### This is the Way It Is

| Object       | Color and Luster                                       | Size and Shape                                                                          | Weight     | Movement                       |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| grasshopper  | dull, brown                                            | about an inch long<br>has three pairs of legs<br>has two pairs of wings<br>has antennae | very light | moves by hopping               |
| a light bulb | whitish with<br>a silvery end<br>yellow when in<br>use | round at one end<br>has a narrower neck<br>at the other end<br>about 13 cm long         | very light | stationary even<br>when in use |

3. **Our Thesaurus** As young people study the impressions they receive of objects through each of their senses, they will gradually acquire a repertoire of descriptive words. Try to encourage the process by progressively building vocabulary charts of words that describe tastes, textures, smells, and colors. With younger children charts will be relatively short and contain very familiar words; charts by older students will be comprised of less common words. Examples of charts devised by a group of fifth graders with the aid of a thesaurus are given below; their creators came gradually to realize that some of the "taste words" were also "smell words," since the two senses are so closely connected.

### Our Thesaurus of Describing Words

#### Words to Describe Smells

|           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| lemony    | sharp     |
| foul      | rancid    |
| pungent   | biting    |
| minty     | sweet     |
| sickening | spicy     |
| fragrant  | smelling  |
| stinking  | revolting |

#### Words to Describe Tastes

|           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| sharp     | mild      |
| sweet     | sour      |
| salty     | bitter    |
| rotten    | bland     |
| tasteless | fancy     |
| acidic    | flavorful |
| savory    | delicious |

#### Words to Describe Textures

|         |          |
|---------|----------|
| slick   | smooth   |
| oily    | glassy   |
| prickly | crinkly  |
| sandy   | soapy    |
| hairy   | wrinkled |
| bumpy   | rocky    |

#### Words to Describe Colors

|           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| emerald   | turquoise |
| sea-green | silvery   |
| peach     | rust      |
| coal      | chocolate |
| cream     | peacock   |
| cardinal  | golden    |

- 4 **Write On!** Once young people have compiled word charts as in activity 3, post the charts and use them for writing Children author stories and/or poems in which they include vivid words from the

lists They write 'sea green poems,' silvery stories,' 'soapy tales,' "salty yarns " and so forth

- 5 **Bubbles Are** A bubble blowing event is one way to focus children's attention on clear descriptions of impressions received from the senses as well as to prompt them to be imaginative in their descriptions To simplify preparation, buy a bottle of the liquid soap intended for bubble making and the loop that comes with the solution On a day when the sun sparkles in the room fill a window area with bubbles Pupils describe the appearance and smell, as well as the feel of bubbles when touched and broken They can compare the bubbles to other things as Ryan did after experiencing a bubble blowing event on a sun filled day

Bubbles are — invisible moons  
transparent lemons  
colored balloons  
floating rainbows  
spinning wheels  
empty snowballs

Ryan grade four

The varied adjectives in Ryan's piece were the product of an extended class talk-time that preceded the writing-time The overall activity was initiated as part of a science study of the way molecules cohere

### **Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills**

- Devise an event for primary grade children that engages them in experiencing, talking, and writing together Base the event on a firsthand experience outside classroom walls Do the same for a group of upper grade children but base their event on a firsthand experience within the classroom
- Design an activity requiring children to rely on their sense of smell or touch for gathering impressions Write out a series of questions you could ask as you orchestrate the activity, the questions should be ones that prompt youngsters to think of and tell additional detail

### **Brainstorming Together**

One exciting technique for thinking together is brainstorming In language arts brainstorming, each participant contributes whatever words or ideas come to mind in reaction to a particular object or event Whether relevant or not, all contributions are accepted equally and are recorded prominently so that they are available as possibilities to weave into later group or individual composing Brainstorming techniques need not follow a group 'happening,' especially when youngsters in upper grades draw from a storehouse of previous experiences, however, one will find (as Ms Grant did in the teaching/learning episode to follow) that brainstorming produces an amazing quantity of material if children first experience together



**Experiencing and Brainstorming—An Exemplar.** The book the teacher held in hand was Leo Lionni's *The Biggest House in the World*. Opening to the first page and reading the title, Anne Grant turned on a recording of 'Serenade' from the ballet *Les millions d'Arlequin* by R. Drigo. As Anne read about the snail whose dissatisfaction with being so little caused him to eat and eat and to grow bigger and bigger until he was too large to move to another cabbage head, the musical accompaniment created a mood completely in harmony with the story. When story action peaked, so did the music, and when the little snail realized the folly of his dissatisfaction, the music lilted once more. Listening children were entranced by story and music, their faces clearly reflecting their empathy for the little snail.

When story and music had ended, Anne Grant said not a word but instead picked up a used margarine cup that was resting on a side counter and then reached in. Out came a tiny brown snail that was tentatively poking its head from its shell house. The children clustered around to look closely. Some grasped the mollusk by its shell to look even more closely through a magnifying glass. Ms. Grant distributed empty snail shells to youngsters on the perimeter of the group because they were having trouble seeing the tiny live one. These children rubbed their fingers across the snail shells and stuck their smallest fingers into the inner chambers. Excitement reigned as the teacher spread a large piece of yellow oaktag on the central composing area of the floor, for on the sheet was an outline sketch of a snail house with the outline of a snail body protruding from it. While one student who excelled in handwriting served as class scribe, the others called out "snail words," prompted at times by guiding questions interjected by Ms. Grant. Children began by proffering snail words they had heard in *The Biggest House in the World* ones like *light, carry, twisting, twitching, house, small, hidden, cabbage*. They and Ms. Grant also offered describing words like *brownish, tiny, round, slimy, wiggly, slow, hard*. They contributed words like *coiled, spiral, circular, looped, staircase* when Ms. Grant suggested they outline the internal pattern of the snail shell. Focusing their attention on the movement of the little brown specimen the children told how the snail navigated *slipping, turning, sliding, cruising, gliding, slinking, creeping, crawling*. They brainstormed snail-related expressions like *portable house, mobile home, house on wheels, house without wheels, on-the-go, moving on, carrying your house with you, don't get too big for your britches*. All these words the class scribe printed carefully on the perimeter of the snail shape as well as along the inner swirls of its spiral. If children were unsure of the spelling, the sleuth for the day quickly checked the dictionary and dictated the correct spelling to the scribe so that the resulting word thungumajig, as the children called word charts like this, was accurate.

Having brainstormed a pool of possible words and phrases for expressing snail thoughts, the youngsters composed together. The form for writing they used was a *diamante*, a relatively structured form comprised of seven lines that contain a contrast. The *diamante*, as devised by Iris Tiedt, patterns in this way:

|              |                                                                                                     |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| First line   | a noun word that names an object or thought                                                         |
| Second line  | two adjectives that describe the first noun                                                         |
| Third line   | three participles (-ing or -ed) that are associated with the first noun                             |
| Fourth line  | four nouns — two referring to the noun in line one two to the noun in line seven                    |
| Fifth line   | three participles that are associated with the noun given in line seven                             |
| Sixth line   | two adjectives that describe the line seven noun                                                    |
| Seventh line | a noun word that names an object or thought that is the opposite of the one given in the first line |

To begin group writing Ms Grant printed the single word *SNAIL* at the top of a large sheet. She asked youngsters to think of animals which were just the opposite of a snail in some important way. Children proposed the elephant, which was very big in contrast to a tiny snail, the rabbit, which was very fleet in contrast to the slow snail, the snake, which was stretched out in contrast to the coiled-up snail and the slug which was without a house in contrast to the snail which carried its house on its back. Having made a number of proposals that fit into the bigger than, faster than, longer than, nakeder than categories, the children compromised on the snake — 'because it begins with the same sound as snail'. The teacher wrote the word *SNAKE* in big letters at the bottom of the bulletin board sheet.

At this point children selected adjective words from those previously brainstormed and listed on the word thingumajig. They selected two they felt were most descriptive of the snail and thought of two parallel words to describe the snake. Then they selected three -ing words about their snail and thought of three parallel ones about the snake. Finally they identified other noun words they associated with snails and snakes. The resulting diamante was

|                             |
|-----------------------------|
| <b>SNAIL</b>                |
| tiny coiled                 |
| twisting twitching turning  |
| spiral shell serpent scales |
| sinking gliding slithering  |
| long stretched-out          |
| <b>SNAKE</b>                |

The children's production was not exactly what an expert would term "poetic," and a biologist might question the accuracy of the description, but nonetheless, the children were thrilled. To them it was fantastic. They hesitated not at all when their teacher suggested they body chant it together. To the accompaniment of *Serenade* they rose from their seats to interpret their thought vocally and physically. Interpreting the snail lines, they brought their arms close to their bodies to twist and turn, but interpreting the snake lines, they extended their arms to slink and slither.



compos ng words into a descriptive thought



using voice and body to express meanings



Designs and Patterns in  
Nature To Associates  
Maryah New Jersey



composing ideas  
independently



Read E. Paul Torrance  
Rewarding Creative  
Behavior (Englewood  
Cliff, N.J.: Prentice Hall,  
1965)

The children were ready for something a bit quieter by the time they returned to their seats. The "something quieter" was, in fact, a short filmloop entitled *Designs and Patterns in Nature* to which Ms. Grant added the music of *Serenade*. Children viewing the loop identified a different animal about which they could compose a nature thought. This full color loop is filled with inchworms, butterflies, blue jays, and so forth. Without being prompted, the children were able to list many animals to write about. Filmloop, projector, paper, and flo-pens were placed in the writing center where youngsters could go to re-view the loop, select an animal, devise original word thingumajigs, and compose an animal thought perhaps in the pattern of a diamante but not necessarily so. In another corner of the center, the snail thingumajig was posted as well as the outline for a diamante and a listing of animals that differ from the snail—the elephant, the slug, the rabbit. Children working at this station could select one of these contrasting animals to compose into a different and original snail diamante. Many youngsters in the following week composed in the writing center, printing their finished productions on colored construction paper cut into the shape of the animal selected. These shapes were mounted on the bulletin board surrounding the snail thought youngsters had cooperatively conceived.

**Brainstorming Words and Ideas for Writing** Brainstorming is a dynamic way to assist children who have trouble thinking through ideas relative to a particular topic in independent writing. By brainstorming children together discover words and ultimately ideas that might never have surfaced if children were composing on their own. In effect, words and ideas mushroom as creative interrelationships emerge.

These word/idea relationships are the content of both discussion and written expression. A teacher can follow brainstorming with group and/or individual writing as Anne Grant did. This sequence provides children with specific words and ideas for writing and even correct spelling if brainstormed thoughts are quickly recorded on chart or chalkboard. One advantage of recording thoughts on a sturdy piece of charting paper is that the chart can be moved into a learning station where the words are available for later independent writing. The chart may be cut into the shape of the object being brainstormed with words being printed along the perimeter and along the key internal features of the object. Teachers like Ms. Grant who have experimented with the technique find that oftentimes children are motivated by the art possibilities of designing thingumajigs and that the resulting word thingumajig is particularly attractive for learning station or bulletin board mounting.

Anne Grant's students used the words generated together as the base for cooperative creation of a thought. Brainstorming works equally well as a springboard into other forms of creative expression. For example, one teacher began a descriptive writing endeavor by showing the full color sound filmstrip *The Sea*—part of the narrationless perception series distributed by Educational Dimensions Corporation—that through music and photographs develops aware-



### Describing Words

wet spattering dark  
burning bright  
blowing bending tossing  
quiet still dry

### Naming Words

shower, flood danger,  
disaster, warning alarm,  
thunderheads clouds

### Descriptive Sentences

Heavy rain bombarded the dry earth  
Blowing screaming wind swirled sand upward  
Lightening bolts fired up the sky

Next children thought up story ideas—things that could happen during the freak storm. For instance, a prospector is caught out in a storm and must run to escape the flash flood filling the dry canyon. Since these youngsters lived in a region where gentle brooks turn into fast flowing torrents during storms, the prospector idea appealed immediately. The teacher encouraged pupils to consider other possibilities. Participants concocted ideas like these: a car breaks down, stranding a motorist out on the desert in a freak storm, during a storm a lizard, a miner, and a burro all take refuge under an overhanging cliff and find security together, two boys disobey their father and get lost on the desert during a storm. After numbers of relatively similar ideas had been thrown into the idea pool, children composed 'storm stories' working individually or in pairs, whichever they preferred.



*Busy Water by Irma Beck*  
Holiday House

Still another teacher experimented with brainstorming in an informational context. To middle grade students, Mr. Bruce read the short, semi-informational book *Busy Water* that creatively outlines steps in the water cycle. He asked half the class to listen to discover steps in the cycle and the other half to think of related words and ideas. After the reading, children made a huge circular chart on which they recorded each step in the cycle and added related words—water words such as *shower, snow, hail, storm, cloud, raining, drip, drop, puddle, brook, stream, creek, river, lake, pond, island, rapids, ocean, splashes, runs down, runs into, rushes by, dashes, bubbles, erodes, evaporates, dam, precipitation, hills, mountains, cycle*. When the chart was burgeoning with words, children formed into four-person groups. Each group composed at least four sentences that summarized steps in the water cycle. Each child in a group took a turn writing a sentence, drawing key words from the word pool.

As these examples indicate, brainstorming is a flexible instructional technique that can readily be adapted so as to provide words, sentences, and ideas for different kinds of expression: poem like thoughts, paragraphs of descriptions, stories, and even informational paragraphs, to name four basic forms most commonly encountered in elementary classrooms. Furthermore, brainstorming requires considerable verbal interaction among pupils as young people interact they are learning to respect contributions of others to verbalize their own ideas, and to function in a group setting. In this respect brainstorming achieves language goals related to both written and oral communication.

**Encouraging Thinking.** The success of brainstorming in eliciting words and ideas for writing depends in large measure on the teacher's ability to ask guiding questions. Assisting young people in their

search the teacher must ask questions that cause students to think about all the sense impressions they are processing. For example, leading a Fourth of July brainstorming session, Ms. Grant queried:

What sounds do we associate with the Fourth? what sights? what tastes? what smells? Remembering that feelings are generally associated with an event, she continued: How do we feel on the Fourth of July? When the children proffered nouns, she asked for companion adjectives and related phrases so that a word like *fireworks* mushroomed into phrases such as *exploding fireworks* and *brilliant fireworks filling the sky with color*.

One teacher who is expert at guiding brainstorming with upper graders keeps ideas flowing by simply directing. Give me more words about that. Hearing that directive, young people in the class know that their teacher wants them to add other words to a previous one. Some times this teacher uses Give me more several times back to back. In that way he gets children to produce lengthy phrases: banshees like sirens whining shrilly through the silent night. Upper graders work cooperatively on a mushrooming phrase like this one: changing preceding words until they achieve a phrase that appeals.

Other related categories for guiding creative brainstorming include:

- Objects — What things do we associate with X?
- Descriptions — What words can we use to describe X?
- Actions — What actions do we associate with X? (Note: encourage children to identify action words by asking also for words ending with *ing* and *ed*.)
- Reactions — How do we feel about or react to X?
- Synonyms — What are synonyms for X?
- Antonyms — What are antonyms for X?
- Comparisons — To what other things or events can we compare X?  
In what way(s) is (are) the two things similar?
- Contrasts — What things or events are extremely different from X?  
In what way(s) is (are) they different?
- Words beginning with specific letters of the alphabet: for example, what words beginning with *s* with *t* do we associate with X?

These categories obviously overlap; in this instance, however, overlap is unimportant since the goal is really not to categorize but rather to trigger an outpouring of words and ideas about the subject. Obviously, too, all categories are not equally appropriate with every subject. Certain subjects produce more reaction and action words; others more descriptive words. Still, others related phrases. In this respect, the kinds of questions asked are dependent on the subject being considered.

Children's previous experiences with brainstorming will also determine a teacher's approach. For first brainstorming with a group, it is generally easiest to do as Mr. Bruce and begin with verbal stimuli like a story, film, filmstrip, with narration, or a series of poems. One can specify that students listen for key words and phrases. With these words, pictures get the ball rolling, so that a chart rapidly takes form and children receive an immediate and positive reinforcement. The stimuli words trigger other words—words related perhaps in sound as well as in meaning.



Some topics for brainstorming:  
Sights: Tastes: Sounds:  
Feelings:

- of Thanksgiving
- of birthdays
- of New Year's
- of Christmas
- of Halloween

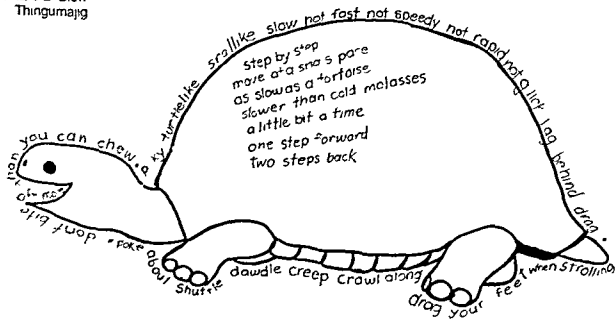
ing to the "triggers." When young people have milked their own minds dry, a teacher may contribute a word or two or ask a question to start children thinking in different directions. Or a participant may check in the thesaurus a word already charted to find related words. The thesaurus will many times supply more words than a single chart can hold, requiring young people to be selective in words included.

Through questions asked, through verbal stimuli selected to get ideas flowing, and through group reliance on the thesaurus, young people are learning techniques for developing ideas fully and for finding words to express those ideas. Pupils, who together have brainstormed descriptive, action, and reaction words, independently try the same categories as a means of expanding their own ideas. Pupils who have worked with one another to create expanded phrases try taking words from their individual writing to build into really descriptive phrases. And pupils who cooperatively have selected words from the thesaurus for class consideration apply the same technique on their own. In this respect young people through brainstorming are learning thinking and organizing skills that will serve them in personal writing.

**Building Vocabulary.** Undoubtedly one of the main outgrowths of brainstorming is vocabulary development. As participants toss out words to be included in the brainstormed pool and as they search references for additional ones, they encounter new or relatively unfamiliar expressions. Interjected into class talk-times and placed on charts, these words become accessible for future use in writing and speaking.

At times brainstorming can be employed primarily as a play with words with the primary goal being growth in word power. Take, for instance, play with the word *fast*. Brainstormers can pour out as many

FIGURE 6-2 Slow Thingumajig

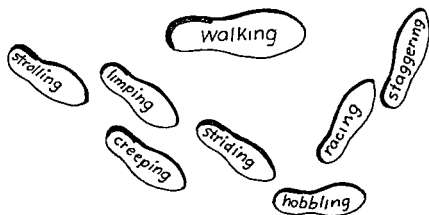


fast words as they can—descriptive words like *quick*, *speedy*, *swift*, *hasty*, fast expressions like *quick as a wink*, *in short order*, *in no time flat*, *in the twinkling of an eye*, *PDQ*, *as fast as my legs would carry me*, *like a shot*, *like a house afire*, fast action words like *dart*, *sprint*, *cover ground*, *bound*, *step on it*, *rush*, *tear*, fast things like *cannon ball*, *lightning*, *rocket*, *arrow*, *express train*, *jet*. This type of activity can be carried out on a continuing basis, with a large piece of heavy-grade oaktag cut into some representational shape being mounted in a word-storming center and with youngsters in pairs going to the center to contribute additional fast words.

Fun words for brainstorming are adjectives, because there are almost endless directions in which thinkers can travel. Some particularly "workable words" include

|       |       |        |          |          |
|-------|-------|--------|----------|----------|
| slow  | heavy | dizzy  | grouchy  | mighty   |
| light | free  | clever | terrible | friendly |
| shy   | proud | funny  | hot      | tired    |

These words are printed at the top of charting paper. As a group activity youngsters contribute all kinds of related words and phrases, or in pairs, they go to a word-building center to add their contributions to an expanding chart.



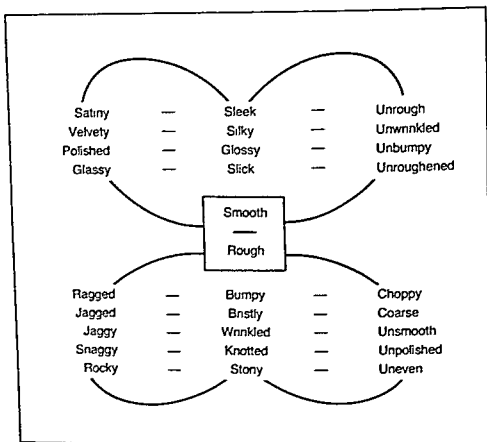
Another kind of word with which to play is the overworked one, like *nice*. Children think of all the possible substitutes for that adjective. They toy with overworked verbs, identifying variant *say*, *walk*, *do*, *make*, or even *fall down* words. The resulting charts become original thesaurus pages to which writers refer as they compose. A dictionary should be kept ready during brainstorming to insure words listed are correctly spelled so that as children draw from the charts during independent and group writing, they have an accurate referent.



A word source:  
W. Cabell Greet *In Other Words: A Beginning Thesaurus* (k 2) (Glenview Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1969)  
and Greet's  
*In Other Words: A Junior Thesaurus* (3-6)  
(Glenview Ill.: Scott  
Foresman, 1969)



In similar fashion children can brainstorm to discover synonym/antonym relationships. An easy beginning with lower grade youngsters is to free associate with a pair of contrasting adjectives such as *empty/full*, *bright/dull*, *friendly/unfriendly*, *rough/smooth*. Both members of a pair are inscribed in the center of an oaktag sheet. At the top of the chart participants by themselves or in groups list *smooth* words, at the bottom *rough* words. For variety word brainstormers can construct two spirals each containing synonyms of one of the pair.



This kind of activity works just as well with upper graders as with primaries, but older children should be able to perceive the slight distinctions in meaning that exist among synonyms. They furthermore, should be able to distinguish the differing contexts in which synonyms are applied. For example, a rough sea is generally termed *choppy* but not *bumpy* or *wrinkled* whereas a mountain peak with a rough summit is termed *jagged* but not *choppy*. This kind of information can be added directly to charts. CHOPPY — seas WRINKLED — sheets, paper, ROCKY — ground and so forth. Upper graders will also quickly discover how helpful the prefix *un-* is in building antonym/synonym charts. Simply by adding *un-* to words already identified, one can add many more words.

As part of art, children can construct the representational charts already mentioned. Children enjoy cutting out shapes that in some way represent the meanings of the word pairs. *Smooth* words are written on a shape with a smooth edge, *rough* on a similar shape with an irregular edge. *Warm* words are written on a stove shape, *cold* on an iceberg shape. *Fat* words are written on a shape wider than it is tall, *thin* words on a shape taller than it is thin.

The opportunity for follow up writing always exists with word brainstorming. Children who have identified *rough* and *smooth* words draw from their word pools as they write rough or smooth stories — "Adrift on a Choppy Sea," "The Velvety Rabbit and the Bristly Porcupine," "I Sat Down Hard on a Jagged Cactus," "Across Slick Ice" or whatever title children dream up. In like manner, children who have identified *say* variants can write conversation stories in which characters address one another directly. In writing these, composers must rely on words like *directed*, *exclaimed*, *explained*, *stated*, *mentioned*, *ordered* — words they have brainstormed earlier. Children who have identified *grouchy* words write grouchy stories in which every character is either grumpy or cranky, glum or grim, moody or sour — again all words identified in earlier brainstorming sessions.

If words brainstormed are collected on a colorful word thingumajig or on a simple chart, the 'jig' or chart can serve as the focal point of an individualized learning station activity, thereby inviting use of the words in writing. Having brainstormed words, children proceed to storm writing topics, which are printed on cards and mounted around the jig or chart. With a pouch of paper, a flo pen or two, a pouch for completed papers, and a set of clear directions, a vocabulary building/writing center is open for business. After several youngsters have visited and written, they orally share stories based on the word and topic charts, in this way youngsters hear charted words in meaningful story contexts. Listeners look for the key words — those brainstormed cooperatively — and locate particularly effective ways their friends have woven these words into stories.

**Brainstorming — A Few More Ideas** Try some of these ideas for stimulating words and ideas

- 1 Writing a class letter — such as a thank-you note to a speaker, to someone who has helped on a class excursion, to another class that has entertained — brainstorm together ideas to be included. A group takes responsibility for writing out a draft of the letter to be sent, drawing on the ideas projected previously by the class. The writing team must return to share its draft with the class, listen to suggestions, and prepare a final draft for mailing.
- 2 Having completed a module or unit of social science study about a country or period in history, children brainstorm together what they consider to be key ideas to remember. These are recorded all over the chalkboard space as each student comes forward to contribute. Later children needing handwriting practice copy the list on large sheets to be placed in a learning station; children go there to draw from the charts words and ideas to write into a single para-

graph What I Consider Important About Africa (or whatever the unit of study was about)

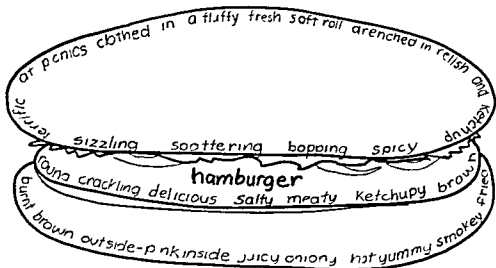
- 3 Brainstorm together the sights, sounds, and sensations of a space trip to the moon Guide youngsters to describe how the engines would sound, how the earth and moon would appear, how the astronauts would feel, what they would do The resulting words and ideas are the beginnings for stories, especially science fiction odysseys, that children write independently after the brainstorming
- 4 Brainstorm together the sights, sounds, and sensations of an odyssey under the sea Guide young people to describe what they might see as they explore a coral reef or a sunken Spanish galleon Children who have watched a Cousteau underwater adventure or tv specials about the sea will be able to describe the animal creatures that abound in its depths This activity will trigger both ideas for writing and talking, as well as interest in oceanography
- 5 Borrow a microscope from a local high school Children who are viewing onion and cheek cells, which are easy to prepare for microscopic viewing brainstorm their impressions of what they are seeing Do not explain about cells and cell walls before the viewing Let the children have free rein to collect their own impressions On another occasion locate a sample of pond water with microorganisms to view under the microscope Children will have to rely on a multitude of action words to describe what they are viewing Diagramming and writing are natural next steps
- 6 In February read a series of valentine poems to children who listen specifically to identify words that express valentine feelings and ideas A little anthology such as *Good Morning to You, Valentine* can be the source of your selections After listening, children spout words heard and remembered as well as others that come to mind From these words spread across bulletin board or chalkboard, children compose valentine thoughts that they print onto original valentine cards



See holiday anthologies of poems compiled by Lee Bennett Hopkins for Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

- *Good Morning to You Valentine* 1976
- *Hey How for Halloween* 1975
- *Sing Hey for Christmas Day* 1975

FIGURE 6-3  
Hamburger  
Thungumaj g



- 7 Some common foods popular among young people can be the stimuli that cause words to flow. These include hamburgers, hot dogs, hoagies (or whatever those gigantic sandwiches are termed in your part of the country), pizza, ice cream cones, banana splits, french fries. Brainstormers concoct pizza, hamburger, hot dog, thinguma jigs in which words are written along the boundaries of a large cut out of the food. They write descriptive paragraphs with the words identified.

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Locate a filmstrip that you think would stimulate a flow of ideas and words. Identify the grade level of the youngsters with whom you intend to use the strip and write out a sequence of questions that you could ask to guide children's brainstorming.
- Select an original topic for brainstorming. Then devise a way to stimulate a flow of words and ideas. Write out a sequence of questions to guide brainstorming, identify oral composition activities in which children draw from their word pools, and design a learning center activity in which children write their related stories or poems. Try the sequence in a classroom if possible.

### Pondering Together

The work of Sidney Simon (1972) and others in value clarification has had considerable impact on the teaching of the social sciences. It has implications as well for the teaching of the language arts. For the strategies of values clarification are primarily oral and interactive. They are ways to get people to analyze and talk about their feelings, opinions, judgments. Pondering together, participants come to understand the bases on which they formulate judgments and make decisions. In the process, participants — talking out their conception of things — acquire oral language skills. In the process too they think through ideas that can become the substance of their writing. In this respect, values clarification strategies are a way of inviting students to think, talk, and write together.

Hilda Taba's work (1964) with thinking and questioning strategies has had considerable impact as well. Taba and her associates have investigated questioning patterns that carry students beyond recall of facts and concepts memorized. They have described questions that stimulate young people to group and classify information to interpret data and make inferences to apply principles and information in predicting, judging, and explaining. Clearly the questioning patterns described by Taba are the patterns through which teachers encourage free flowing discussions through which students learn how to think through complex relationships and through which students learn how to communicate together.

To explain some of the strategies for oral interaction developed and described by Simon and Taba and to show how these techniques can



See also Louis Rath et al., *Values and Teaching* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill, 1966).



See also Hilda Taba, *Teaching Strategies to Promote Cognitive Growth* in John Verduin, *Conceptual Models in Teacher Education* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1967).

be modified in work with literature and language content, here is a description of an episode that occurred in one sixth grade. It will serve as a model for designing similar kinds of language-learning experiences

**Pondering Together — An Exemplar.** It was after lunch. Children returning to their classroom were met by a large marquee-like sign mounted on an easel at the doorway. The sign said

The Think Tank  
Those entering must be ready to think!  
Film Showing Today at 1 00 P M  
*The Lorax*  
by  
Dr. Seuss  
(pseudonym for Theodore Giesel)  
Discussion Today at 1 30 P M  
Reporting After 2 15 P M

→  
ga hering imp ers ons for  
express on

A rotating colored spotlight that flashed red, yellow, blue, and green in sequence across the sign further piqued children's interest, the darkened room, ready for the film showing, piqued it a little more. Without any preliminaries the sixth grade teacher flicked on the projector, and the bright reds, yellows, blues, and greens of *The Lorax* danced across the screen. The students sat entranced for a half hour watching the Onceler systematically destroy the land as the Lorax warned of impending disaster. At film end, the teacher asked "How many of you liked the Onceler character in the film? Wave your hand high if you do." No hands went up. "How many of you liked the Lorax character? Wave your hand." There was a flurry of hands, and the teacher continued "Let's talk about why we all disliked the Onceler. What are some of the specific things the Onceler did that we didn't like?"

→  
identifying specific  
examples to support an  
opinion

At that children began to contribute. One told of how the Onceler had dumped Gluppity-Glupp and Schloppity-Schlopp as well as garbage into the lakes and rivers, a second, of how the Onceler had polluted the air with fumes, another of how the Onceler had cut down all the Truffla Trees, and still another of how the Onceler had cut great scars in the earth to construct roads. At one point, to jog students' memories, their teacher pantomimed an Onceler act — smoking a big cigar and shaking ashes onto the floor. He asked students if they could pantomime another act, one youngster portrayed nonverbally how the Onceler had peeled a banana and had thrown the peel carelessly out the window. During this stage, a student served as scribe recording the specifics on a notebook sheet.

→  
pe oning relationships

Did the Onceler do anything that was good? queried the teacher. Children pondered for a moment, then one volunteered that the Onceler had supplied jobs and they meant better homes and food for all the Onceler people. A second volunteered that the Onceler had saved the last Truffla Tree seed so that perhaps Truffla Trees could grow again.

Children pondered next why the Onceler had done what he had and who the Onceler really was. Almost unanimously the sixth graders decided without hesitation that greed was the motive and that the Onceler was "big business."

"Do you think that the Onceler was more than that?" the teacher pressed. The scribe read an item from the list the class had previously developed — that the Onceler had cut down all the Truffla Trees. "Has anyone here caused a tree to be cut down unnecessarily — just *once*?" To jog ideas, the teacher rolled up a piece of clean paper and tossed it into the basket. At that many hands went up as children related when they had thrown away paper items they could have reused. One youngster described something he had read recently on how used paper is changed back to pulp in recycling plants and converted into new paper products. Item by item the young people went through the list recorded by the scribe and described when they themselves had

←  
contributing ideas to a  
class discussion

### A Pollution Evils Board

#### The Litterbug ☐☐

A man is driving along an open stretch of a major interstate highway. He decides to have some candy, so he opens a package, pops a piece into his mouth, and tosses the wrapper out the window.

#### The Smokestack ☐☐

A large electrical generating plant produces power by burning a high sulfur coal. It emits thick gases into the air.

#### The Hog ☐☐

A child asks for an extra big piece of dessert, but finds that he/she is too full to eat the whole thing, so leaves the rest to be thrown out.

#### The Dumper ☐☐

An oil tanker cleans its tanks by dumping what is left offshore. The oil washes ashore gumming up miles of beach and marshland.

#### The Puffer ☐☐

The sign in the people-filled, unventilated room reads:  
No Smoking. A woman lights a cigarette and smokes until the room is smoke-filled.

just once acted like the Onceler. Gradually they began to comprehend that they were the Onceler, and that greed was too general a reason to explain acts like those in the movie.

Students focused now on the Lorax. "Why did everyone like the Lorax? What did the Lorax do that we liked?" The discussants supported their earlier vote by giving specific acts of the Lorax. "Whom did the Lorax stand for in real life?" The children decided that the Lorax represented everyone who stands up and speaks, even when others take an opposite stand.

After considerable time had been spent in discussion of "what and why," the teacher shifted gears. "So far," he announced, "we have been judging the rightness and wrongness of acts. As we have begun to see, there are acts that appear more wrong than others. Now we are going to rank acts in terms of which ones appear more wrong than others. I have a sheet in which I have described acts very similar to the ones committed by the Onceler. Put a number 1 in the square next to the name of the offender you consider to be the worst one, a number 2 next to the name of the offender you consider to be a little less bad, and so on down the line." The teacher distributed this sheet, and the children individually went to work to rank order the offenders (see p. 211).

When each student had completed a sheet, the teacher divided the class into five task teams of five persons each. These teams had to arrive at a compromise sheet that embodied to some extent the thinking of each member. Those whose opinion differed from others on their team with respect to the rank ordering of items had to try to convince others on the team. In so doing, children became actively involved trying to change other's opinions so that the composite ranking would reflect reasons they believed were significant. The teacher waited until all the teams had compiled their rankings, which they recorded in the second box next to each name on the task sheet. At that point the team secretary came to the chalkboard to record the consensus on a chart the teacher had outlined there. The team findings are shown below.

| Data Table |               |                |         |            |            |
|------------|---------------|----------------|---------|------------|------------|
| Team No.   | The Litterbug | The Smokestack | The Hog | The Dumper | The Puffer |
| 1          | 4             | 2              | 3       | 1          | 5          |
| 2          | 4             | 1              | 5       | 2          | 3          |
| 3          | 4             | 2              | 5       | 1          | 3          |
| 4          | 5             | 1              | 4       | 2          | 3          |
| 5          | 3             | 2              | 5       | 1          | 4          |

Together the class analyzed the results, considering in what respects team rankings, although different in some ways, were also similar. They noted that all teams had ranked the Smokestack and the Dumper as very bad and had identified reasons for these high rankings — the fact that the acts hurt more people and were committed by groups rather than by individuals. Teams ranking the Dumper higher than the Smokestack (and vice versa) gave reasons to support their

rankings. In like manner participants considered acts they had generally ranked as least offensive—littering and puffing. Again they verbalized the criteria they had used to formulate a judgment. In each case no teacher judgment was rendered on the validity of the criteria; the criteria were verbalized so that children could comprehend the kinds of bases on which they were operating and so that they would have practice defending a position orally.

To wrap up the session, the teacher returned to the beginning—to *The Lorax* in its book form. He opened to the page toward the end that shows a memorial like pile of rocks that bears the imprint **UNLESS**. What significance does the word *unless* have in the story? he asked. Children remembering from the film version explained that unless everyone was more careful, the earth would be no more. The teacher wrote the main clause on the board and followed it with a series of *unless*es in the following pattern:

The earth will be no more

unless \_\_\_\_\_  
 unless \_\_\_\_\_  
 unless \_\_\_\_\_  
 unless \_\_\_\_\_

On the spot, the class composed a string of specific *unless* clauses based on their discussion:

The earth will be no more

unless we protect the forest from being cut away  
 unless we stop the fouling of the air  
 unless we halt the reckless dumping into our waterways  
 unless we work together to save the land

That brief summary oral composition experience with a sentence inserting pattern ended the Think Tank Session for the afternoon. By then it was time to go home. The next afternoon, however, the students entered The Writing Box—the title spread across the doorway marquee—to write stories modeled after *The Lorax*. To introduce the allegorical form of the story, the teacher read a parallel allegory—a story of elephants and hay—one that had been part of a radio public service message by an oil company. Children talked about how the elephants and the hay story communicated its message and compared the story technique to that employed by Dr. Seuss. They quickly perceived that in allegories story characters stand for persons in real life and that story acts stand for real life acts. They saw that by using a representational technique writers send a message to readers. Following the talk time, the children spent much of that afternoon composing original allegories. Some worked by themselves; others in writing teams. For fun, they signed their stories with a pseudonym.

**Supplying the Content to Ponder** One key to the success of this episode in teaching and learning lies in the extent of student involvement. Children participated fully in the discussion. How does a teacher bring about such complete participation through which stu-

← summarizing key ideas through oral composition

← composing an original story



dents can refine oral communication skills? Let us talk briefly of the instructional strategies that were employed, in the process drawing conclusions about ways to involve children in discussion



See Lee B. Hopprins and  
Isha A. Arsen Partners  
in Progress (New York  
City 1971) ch 3 for  
ideas related to current  
events that can lead to  
talking and writing

First, the teacher did not attempt discussion in a vacuum of information. Not only did the film motivate but it also provided content. In short, children had something of substance to ponder and discuss. Substance or content is essential if discussions in elementary classrooms are to go beyond the superficial into the realm of fundamental problems, issues, and ideas.

In this regard one can see how important it is to develop speaking and writing skills in the context of basic curricular areas, especially the areas of literature and of science and social sciences. The ideas in books and the information and concepts of the social and natural sciences are the warp and the woof of discussion and eventually of writing. Talking together becomes oral pondering as young people identify key strands of information, note relationships among strands, weave them together into generalizations, and ultimately formulate opinions and judgments. Writing together becomes a means of recording ideas discussed as well as one of summarizing and clarifying them.

In the episode just described the teacher turned to an allegorical film to supply the content for thinking, talking, and writing together. Other materials provide content equally well. A teacher can share a short story or poem, which the children later ponder as a group. Very young children can ponder a feeling book like Judith Viorst's *I'll Fix Anthony*—the internal talkings of a little brother as he tells himself what he will do "when he is six" to get back at his big brother. Children decide whether they like Anthony and whether they like little brother. They identify mean acts and good ones. They think about why little brother has mean thoughts. They tell times when they felt just like little brother and said, "I'll fix \_\_\_\_\_." Children who are six go on to write their own repetitive lines that pattern after Judith Viorst's "When I'm seven, \_\_\_\_\_." They write their own "I'll Fix" stories.

Young people can also ponder a shared newspaper clipping that relates a current event about which there is a difference of opinion. Students identify key information and go on to formulate their own opinions, which they must defend with facts. Since history is the study of past current events, a teacher can handle past happenings in much the same fashion. Studying controversial events such as the "treason" of Benedict Arnold, the "civil disobedience" of the Boston Tea Party, the duel shooting of Alexander Hamilton, young people read several accounts of the event—accounts in their social science books and in general references. They identify key information and note discrepancies in facts. They ponder reasons for acts, viewing an issue from all sides. And they look at labels such as treason and civil disobedience as the projection of one point of view. Ultimately discussants formulate their own positions on the issue, take sides, and prepare to support their positions with reasons. Note the word *positions* in the preceding sentence. That is a key one for within discussion groups all children need not and should not arrive at the same opinion.

Not only stories, news clippings, films, and material from text books, but also graphic information can provide the substance for pondering and discussing. Several political cartoons viewing the same event from different perspectives, a series of graphs showing oil producing and oil consuming relationships, a series of maps depicting relationships among location of large population centers, water routes, and mineral/energy reserves, data from a series of classroom observational or experimental studies—all can be studied and discussed by groups. The possibilities are practically endless.

**Performing Progressively More Complex Thinking Tasks** A second technique for involving children in discussion is to lay the foundation for higher level thinking tasks by starting with lower level ones. A lower level task is identifying specific examples. The teacher of *The Lorax* did this when early in the sequence he called for the specific acts committed by the Onceler.

Hilda Taba (1964) showed that identifying specific examples is a lower level cognitive task as compared to tasks such as grouping related items, labeling groups or categories, describing data, formulating generalizations and inferences, identifying criteria for judging, developing judgments based on criteria. Taba's research indicates that if children are asked to perform higher level, more abstract thinking operations before identifying specific examples, discussants tend not to be able to perform the task and discussion founders. It indicates that to involve young people ultimately in discussion of complex interrelationships so that they acquire higher level thinking discussing skills, a teacher should sequence questions from less to more abstract.



See Dorothy Hennings  
*Mastering Classroom  
Communication* (Pacific  
Palisades, Calif.  
Goodyear 1975) ch. 6 for  
ideas for sequencing  
questions



Pondering together

What Tabas work verifies is that guiding a discussion to involve children cognitively is not an easy task. Planning a discussion session (as differentiated from a low level conversation), teachers must think through a tentative sequence of questions through which to guide youngsters in pondering diverse ramifications. Although in the actual discussion teachers probably will diverge from their plans, it is helpful to consider in advance the general kinds and sequences of questions so that thinkers move from a citing of specific examples to a pondering of relationships. In essence, teachers must have a discussion plan and as they teach, apply that plan flexibly if they are to involve children in thinking and talking together.

**Voting** A third instructional strategy to involve children in pondering and talking together is voting. The teacher in the Lorax episode opened the session with a simple vote with listeners indicating by waving their hands whether they liked or disliked a character. Dr. Simon advocates judgmental voting especially as an ice breaker at the beginning of a pondering together session. In voting, each and every participant is involved—no one sits back while others talk since everyone reacts with a nonverbal signal—hand waving. Simon (1972) suggests five nonverbal signals students can make, though one can stick to simple hand waving if preferred. The five signals are

- thumbs up and waving around if reactors like something or are in high agreement,
- thumbs up if reactors like or agree,
- thumbs down if reactors dislike or disagree,
- thumbs down and waving around if reactors dislike or disagree violently,
- arms crossed if reactors have no comment

That the first response is nonverbal and in unison has its advantages according to Sidney Simon. A nonverbal response is easier to make than a verbal one. The reactor need not phrase a sentence or select appropriate words; rather he/she reacts almost spontaneously. For children fearful of participating orally in groups, a unison response allows immediate participation with the response blending into the group's. Also the fact that one is contributing even though that contribution is part of a unison response accustoms one to joining in. The involvement breeds greater involvement as youngsters are caught up together in an issue.

**Rank Ordering and Defending** Asking young people to rank order and then to defend the ordering is another strategy for stimulating the in-depth thinking that is the heart of active discussion. In rank ordering discussants make choices among competing alternatives and proceed to explain the reasons for their choices. They discover that issues are often times more complex than at first is apparent and in the process acquire and refine the oral presentational skills necessary in clarifying and defending a position to others. The teacher of the Lorax episode was employing the ranking/defending strategy when he asked children to rank order the five acts described on the Pollution Evils Board. Students

See Sidney Simon, *Values Clarification* (New York: Holt, 1972) on which this paragraph is based.

were forced to make choices among alternatives defend their choices to members of their team, develop a group consensus, and defend that consensus before the class

The value of rank ordering and defending lies in the fact that students must go beyond the easy labels 'good' and 'bad'. They must think about relationships to judge extent of good and evil. In so doing young people are functioning within a gray area in which there is no absolutely right or wrong answer. Since all children in a class will generally not rank a series of alternatives in the same way, the strategy elicits a difference in opinion and that difference is a key to involved discussions. Young people typically are eager to defend their team's reasoning, and discussion becomes fast and furious with little need for teacher guidance of the active give and take.

In the exemplar that introduced this section, the alternatives that students ranked were devised by the teacher and presented in written form. One can try variations of the technique, for instance, delivering the options orally. With this variation, students at the same time will be refining their listening skills. Using an oral approach in lower grades, one may wish to limit alternatives to three so that youngsters will be able to recall significant details. Or one can work with a small writing team to compose discussion alternatives related to a social science or current events topic being studied, a story read, or a film viewed. In that case, individuals from the writing team present the alternatives orally to the larger group for rank ordering. Or if young people have pondered an Evils Board of your making, individually they can devise a follow-up sheet of related evils for future rank ordering and discussion.

Some of the ideas associated with values clarification have recently come under attack. See, for example, Stewart's 'Clarifying Values Clarification: A Critique' in the June 1975 *Phi Delta Kappan*. The reason for cautions being expressed, however, appears not to be the strategies — such as voting and rank ordering — advocated by values clarification specialists, rather, the reason appears to be the content of certain discussions introduced into classrooms, particularly at the high school level. Some of the content has revolved around extremely controversial questions about which there are strong emotional feelings within communities, such as abortion, use of drugs, birth control, and euthanasia. As the exemplar at the beginning of this section shows, the strategies can be applied successfully to elementary school content about which there are fewer strong emotional tensions.

**Composing Together** Action-packed discussions are a stepping stone into writing. Ideas pondered are clarified and enlarged so that by the time youngsters compose those ideas on paper the question 'What shall I write about?' ceases to be a problem. Then too writing down is a natural step after pondering together, to follow a discussion with a composing activity is one way to focus on key points in the discussion and to teach summarizing skills directly. In a discussion context, oral composition is a technique for evaluating growth in listening. The teacher discovers whether participants have followed the progression of ideas discussed and have distinguished the significant from the

less significant. The teacher of the Lorax episode was doing this when he engaged children in the composition of the "unless lines." These identified key discussion concerns.

Still another purpose for following discussion with composing is to integrate the teaching of writing skills into ongoing class activity. The teacher of *The Lorax* engaged his students in composition work with a complex repetitive sentence pattern in which a series of subordinate clauses, introduced by the word *unless*, was separated by commas. For several months the teacher had gradually been introducing his students to ways to write and punctuate sentences formed by inserting one into another sentence. The summary oral composition activity was an ideal opportunity to reinforce those learnings. Very often exercises such as this fit naturally into a thinking/talking sequence so that children acquire basic skills at a point when those skills are needed.

**Pondering Some More — A Few Activities to Consider.** Here are a few activities to demonstrate other strategies to involve children in thinking, talking, and writing, and to show how schools can develop oral language skills within the subject content areas, especially the social sciences.

- 1 Engage upper elementary students in hypothetical thinking by presenting *You Are There—What Will You Do?* problems to ponder.

You are a Bostonian during pre-Revolutionary days. Friends ask you to take part in dumping the tea in Boston Harbor. You recognize that this is breaking the law. What do you do?

You are a rich New Yorker during the Civil War. You have been called to serve in the northern army. Legally you have the right to pay someone who needs the money to serve in your place. What do you do?

History is filled with dilemmas like these. As a class studies a period of history, keep alert for value conflicts to translate into *You Are There—What Will You Do?* vignettes. Interjected into a discussion, they can prompt spontaneous debate. Make sure, of course, that children have sufficient background information with which to support their opinions.

- 2 Watch for similar value conflicts in the news to convert into vignettes for discussion.

You are the head of a large governmental agency. You discover that people under you have been pocketing lots of public money. If you "blow the whistle on them," it means loss of your job for you are responsible for acts committed in your agency. What do you do?

You are a writer living in a country where there is no freedom of the press. You have some information which you feel should be written and shared. If you do this, you may be imprisoned or even killed. What do you do?

With upper grade children current events time can be more than a recounting of what is happening in the news. It can be a time for active discussion by imagining oneself in the situation and pondering what one would and should do.

- 3 Watch for similar value conflicts in everyday living  
In school you see a classmate copying answers during a test What do you do?  
In a store you see a shoplifter slip a can of tuna into a coat pocket What do you do?  
You are eating in a fast food restaurant When the waitress bills you, you see that she forgot to ring up the fries you ate What do you do?
- 4 Orally present a value conflict like those in activities 1-3 to your upper grade class Then try the contemplation strategy Children sit quietly thinking of the action they will take On slips of paper they write down the course of action determined and reasons for it Slips without names are collected, read, and discussed, with the class reacting to the "contemplation slips" Or students hold on to their own contemplation slips and use them as participation notes during discussion
- 5 Or duplicate examples like those in exercises 1-3 above Give copies to discussion teams for consideration Teams must arrive at a consensus and support their position before the class This is the consensus/discussion strategy
- 6 Children who are 'figuring out' together will become actively involved in discussion For example, distribute road maps of the type obtained from gasoline companies Children try to figure out why towns and major cities became located where they did, why highway patterns are as they are, why some areas are less populated than others Figuring out together, children may be able to discover relationships that they record as summary generalizations As children work together, they are acquiring discussion and summarizing skills as well as understanding of social/geographical relationships
- 7 Literature materials around which you can structure free-wheeling discussions are myths and fables Children reacting to a fable ponder what they would have done if they had been in the situation, reacting to a myth, they judge acts

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- A format for sequencing activities so that children are listening, speaking, writing talking, and thinking as they work with ideas from books and from the content areas has been set forth in this section That format in summary is
  - 1 *Contact with Content* Students encounter background concepts and information
  - 2 *Pondering Together* Students orally ponder the content, they identify specific examples and then continue to formulate generalizations, inferences, opinions judgments As they ponder, they may vote, rank order, hypothesize what they would do, defend their position, contemplate, figure out

- 3 *Composing Together* In oral composition students summarize ideas discussed. The summary thoughts are charted so that later children writing independently can draw ideas from the chart.
- 4 *Going It Alone* Students independently go on to write and/or read material based on what they have pondered and composed together.

Devise a sequence of discussion related activities based on this format. First select some kind of motivating content material. Decide the kinds of questions you will ask in relation to content. Determine how you will employ specific strategies such as voting, rank ordering, hypothesizing, even brainstorming. Think through an oral composition exercise and an independent follow up activity. If possible, try out the sequence with a group of children.

### Conversing Together

This chapter has focused on ways to engage children in active discussion as a bridge into writing. Discussion has been presented as a relatively structured activity—structured so that children have the opportunity to think through relationships and build not only vocabulary and oral language skills but to refine cognitive skills as well. There are, of course, times when teachers will involve children in general conversations. These are the sharing times when teacher and children chat informally.

Chatting has a place, especially in lower grade classrooms where children have difficulty in handling complex interrelationships. Time should be scheduled for chatting during which children talk about themselves, tell about something exciting they did, tell about something they are anticipating doing, describe what they like in sports, food, pets, describe things they have seen, heard, or read. Many teachers chat with students.

- before a vacation. Children tell what they hope to do. A teacher could share some good books for vacation reading at the same time.
- after an important event such as the arrival of a new brother or sister in a family or the arrival of a new student in the class, the building of a new structure in the neighborhood, a fire in the community, a national election, the World Series or a bowl game. Even a big disaster that children come to school talking about. Several children tell what they know about the event.
- after a film or tv viewing. Children tell parts they liked or disliked.

Chatting occurs in a number of different places and contexts. Children and teacher chat in the playground, sharing their feelings about a game just played, on the bus, going to or returning from a class outing, in the halls, and at the classroom door. Much of this kind of informal talk is

spontaneous, triggered by interest in the immediate happening. It occurs, of course, in the classroom when the teacher encounters a child who is bubbling over with excitement about something he/she has seen, heard, or experienced. Sometimes a teacher draws the child aside and chats with the youngster, at other times he/she gathers a group of youngsters around the bubbling one so that that child can tell everyone. On still other occasions when many children have much to talk about, a teacher allows time for chatting-mates to talk with one another. Some teachers have found it most productive to pair off children for conversation. Then, during conversation times, chatting-mates get together if they have things to share.

Chatting together, children begin to acquire basic conversational skills. They learn to respond with related ideas to comments made by others, to ask questions so that a conversationalist will tell additional things that happened, to change the topic without offending, to wait and not to interrupt, to moderate voice level. These are important interpersonal skills since much of adult talk is conversational.

### **Thinking, Talking, and Writing Together — A Summary Thought or Two**

Everyone has experienced the frustration of taking pen in hand to compose a letter, a report, or perhaps a story, only to find that words are hard to come by and sentences literally refuse to be written. The result is an empty sheet that stares relentlessly back or a page filled with sentences written and promptly scratched out. Everyone has similarly experienced the joy of talking out embryonic ideas with a companion and of discovering that ideas suddenly gel. In "talking about," a person finds words to express ideas, and ramifications not previously perceived come to mind. Now as a writer returns to the empty sheet, words flow and sentences take form. Where before there was only confusion, now there is clarity.

Remembering their own frustrations and joys, teachers should take special care as they design language experiences to build in joys and successes rather than frustrations and failures. Teachers need to prepare children for independent writing by engaging them in oral composition, in brainstorming, in pondering, in conversing. Through talking and writing together, children will find ideas to communicate and words with which to express ideas on paper. This is as true for one to one talk as it is for group talk. A child struggling alone with an idea benefits from talking out that idea with a teacher or even a fellow student. Just as with group discussion, one to-one talk forces the child working out an original idea to verbalize it. In the process the child gets a better grasp of the idea and finds the words to communicate it. For this reason, a teacher must be available for individual talk as children write and be aware that if youngsters strike a road block in thinking, he/she should invite a talking-out of the problem. If several children are struggling, the teacher gathers them together for an impromptu talk session or matches students into pairs who chat together about their ideas.



"Talking about" leads not only to crystallization of ideas preparatory to writing but also to increased facility with oral language. Discussing issues, events, problems, and conflicts, children gradually acquire the ability to find the right words and expressions so that they can describe, explain, and defend their ideas to others. To be able to talk in a clear and interesting manner is a language skill, a most basic one that schools hope children acquire through language arts programs.

Talking about is a skill, not a content area. In other words, people must talk about something, and in classrooms that something must be worthwhile and relevant if language activity is to have validity. Acquiring and refining oral language skills must take place as children make contact with basic content—literature, social science, natural science, current events, mathematics, and personal experience. To talk about oral language skills and about ways to behave during a discussion or conversation, to list steps in conversation or discussion, or to read about discussion skills in a language arts book is *not* to learn oral language skills. As with most skills, oral language skills are acquired and refined by participating actively in the process.

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# Creative thinking and creative writing—adventures in wonderland

“Cunouser and cunouser! cried Alice (she was so much surprised that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English) “I *ow* I’m opening out like the largest telescope that ever was! Good bye feet!” (for when she looked down at her feet they seemed to be almost out of sight they were getting so far off) Oh my poor little feet I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you *ow* dears? I’m sure I shan’t be able! I shall be a great deal too far off to trouble myself about you.”

*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

Henry Dag, the teacher met in the previous chapter, welcomed his sixth graders one afternoon with a flashing marquee that announced

## The Creative Thinking Forge

Enter here to hammer out ideas

Equipment necessary

Hammer to shape ideas

Anvil to bang ideas on

Forge to heat up ideas so they are malleable

Mental tongs to grab ideas as you shape them

Filmstrip viewing ‘The City’ at 1:00 P.M.

Forging session following the viewing!



Order labels for your  
flashing marquee  
The Writing Workshop  
A Creative Writing Studio  
Fantasyland  
Imagination Land  
A Creative Thinking Lab  
The Writing Works

This afternoon the filmstrip projector and tape recorder were on standby, and Mr. Dag treated the class to a viewing of the full color sound strip ‘The City’ (Educational Dimensions Corporation, Great Neck, New York). The strip has no narration and through sounds and pictures helps students perceive the variety and beauty of an urban environment. Mr. Dag used the filmstrip to envelop students in city things and city thoughts as part of a module on urban living that they were encountering in social studies.

When the students had viewed the two nine-minute segments that comprise the strip, Mr. Dag explained that they were going to forge some new relationships. He sparked thinking by asking, ‘Have you ever thought of a city as a big machine? In what ways is a city like a machine?’ First responses were words that could describe the workings of both city and machine. To spark more comparisons, Dag interjected ideas to consider. ‘Think of things shared by cities and machines. Think of *-ing* words that describe both machine and city actions. Think of how city and machine are

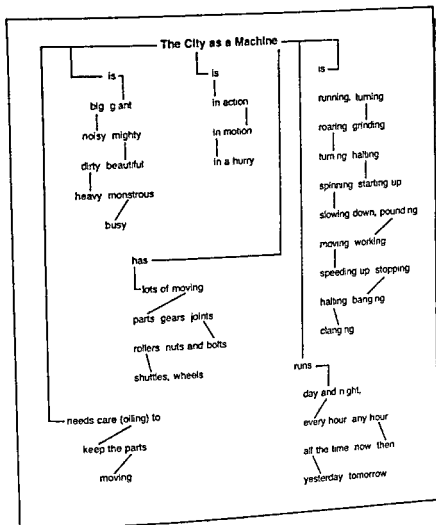


Ordering uncommon  
reactions



Ordering words to express  
reactions

at the beginning of the day at the end of the day Think of words that tell when As pupils responded Mr Dag recorded items on a city as machine chart



From these words the sixth graders together hammered out a free thought — City Machine

### City Machine

The mighty city runs all day—  
 Roaring loudly  
 Grinding fast  
 Pounding more  
 Spinning round



building uncommon  
 relationships into word  
 pictures

The mighty city runs all night —  
 Roaring softly,  
 Grinding slowly,  
 Pounding less  
 Spinning on

At that point Mr Dag sparked a related "forge," asking students to contemplate the question "Do you think a city is more like a tree, more like a beehive, or more like a carousel?" He distributed contemplation slips, scraps of colored paper. Each sixth grader picked one of the three options, wrote it on his/her contemplation slip, and added a few notes on ways the chosen item resembles a city. On the slip too a youngster wrote words usually associated with tree, beehive, or carousel but that could be applied to a city as well.

Having contemplated the options, young people raised their hands in a vote to indicate their choices, which across the class were about evenly distributed among the three options. This difference of opinion stimulated talk, and youngsters willingly volunteered reasons for selecting a particular option. Again by asking questions, Dag encouraged students to explore their reasons in greater depth. For example, he asked young people developing the analogy between tree and city "In what way can we say that a city has roots? branches? leaves? Are there seasonal tree words that we can use in talking about a city?"

Interestingly enough the teacher had to ask few questions, for the preliminary work with city as machine had laid the groundwork, students understood the kinds of relationships to explore. As the class shared words and ideas, a scribe recorded on the board words related to the object in question that could be applied to a city. The final list looked something like the one here.

→  
 finding expressive words  
 to use in composing

| Beehive Words |            | Tree Words  |              | Carousel Words |                |
|---------------|------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| buzzing       | humming    | grows       | spreads      | up and down    | music          |
| noisy         | bees       | roots       | leaves       | around and     | dancing        |
| busy          | nonstop    | branches    | pointing     | a round        | spinning       |
| tight         | crowded in | arteries    | veins        | noisy          | pleasure       |
| packed        | jammed     | network     | intertwining | sounds         | colored lights |
| moving        | constant   | interlacing | twisting     | moving         | calling        |
| action        | active     | changing    | moving       | good times     |                |
| action /      | building   | swaying     | rests        | amusement      |                |
| sweet         | hive       | waits for   | cold         | flashing       |                |
| cells         | moves      | spring      |              | colors         |                |
| produces      | comb       | cycles      |              | rotating       |                |
| occupied      | many       |             |              | stops for      |                |
|               |            |             |              | people         |                |
|               |            |             |              | lots of        |                |
|               |            |             |              | people         |                |
|               |            |             |              | there          |                |
|               |            |             |              | sign boards    |                |

Forging sentences from the words, the children orally composed a series of similes. The ones they compromised on were —

The city buzzes like a noisy beehive crowded with working bees  
The city spreads like a growing tree sending out subway roots and highway branches  
The city moves like a friendly carousel going round and round up and down

stretching real onsh ps  
through creat ve s mles

By now the sixth graders were in high gear, they brainstormed other things to which they could compare a city: a turtle, an escalator, a train, a planet, a bird, a rock, a piper, an anthill, a solar system, a spaceship, a firefly, a spider web. Each student selected one or more of these to write into creative comparisons during the independent thinking and writing time that followed. Shortly the young people regrouped so individuals could share their lines with one another. The class together edited particularly appealing lines and added those to the series of creative city comparisons they had already begun.

#### The Anvil — Hammer out your ideas here

**Purpose** — to see relationships that boggle the mind.

**Task** — Think about one of the subjects listed on the edge of this direction sheet. When you have selected one subject to hammer at, think of a second object that resembles your chosen subject in some mind-boggling way — just as we said that a city resembles a machine, a tree, and a beehive. On a sheet list as many words as you can think of that generally are used to talk about the second object but that can be applied creatively to the chosen subject as well.

Next write a few lines. Talk about your subject using some of the words usually associated with the second object.

If you have trouble thinking of unique relationships, read the little poem "Fog" by Carl Sandburg in the book on the table. In it Sandburg pictures fog as coming in "on little cat feet" and sitting on "slept haunches." Then think of something else the fog resembles and use that resemblance to write some words and lines about the fog.

fog  
river  
skyscraper  
train  
kite  
lighthouse  
panty hose  
snail  
mountain  
computer  
automobile  
island  
star



Other materials to  
integrate into the  
experience

Lee Bennett Hopkins *The  
City Spreads Its Wings*  
(New York: Watts, 1970)

Sounds of My City —  
Folkways record  
distributed by Scholastic  
(Englewood Cliffs, N.J.)



expanding mind boggling  
relationships



A good reference is  
Hughes Mearns *Creative  
Power: The Education of  
Youth in the Creative Arts*  
2d ed. (New York: Dover  
1958)

To pull together the diverse strands developed in The Creative Thinking Forge, Henry Dag shared a piece in which a poet has tucked some city comparisons so smoothly that the resulting word picture is an absolute delight. The piece Dag chose was Langston Hughes' *City*, which describes a city as spreading "its wings," as making a song in stone, as going "to bed," as "hanging lights about its head." The sixth graders, primed from their own work with city thoughts, listened and enjoyed.

During the week that followed their session in The Creative Thinking Forge, students developed similar kinds of relationships on their own. At a follow-up learning station labeled "The Tongs — Pick Up Your Ideas Here," pupils drew and colored sketches of a city depicting qualities shared by the city and by an object that the city resembles in a mind boggling way. Posted in this station was the listing of creative city comparisons the class had composed as a group. At a second station labeled "The Anvil—Hammer Out Your Ideas Here," Mr. Dag had listed a potpourri of things: fog, river, skyscraper, lighthouse, train, kite, mountain, automobile, island, computer, panty hose. The attached task card announced an individual writing task.

### Creating and Writing

Mr. Dag labeled his class's afternoon search for relationships between a city and diverse things such as a machine, a beehive, and a tree. A Creative Thinking Forge. All teachers of language arts are responsible for triggering creative thinking, especially in the context of written expression. To understand what is involved in stimulating creative writing, a teacher must understand the nature of the creative act. That is where this chapter begins.

**Creating—A Few Notes** In a fine little volume *On Knowing* (1962, p. 18), Jerome Bruner speaks of the creative process: "the act of a man creating is the act of a whole man... it is this rather than the product that makes it good and worthy." To Bruner a creative act is one that "produces effective surprise... that strikes (the creator) with wonder or astonishment." As Bruner explains, "Effective surprises have the quality of obviousness about them when they occur, producing a shock of recognition following which there is no longer astonishment." Everyone in creating has experienced the surprise, the shock, the 'ah ha!' that is part of creating. Often it is this shock that makes creating a joyous adventure in wonderland and propels one to complete the chores both physical and mental that are part of creating.

Creating is also a paradoxical process according to Dr. Bruner, requiring both detachment and commitment, passion and decorum, freedom and domination, deferral and immediacy. To create — to put together new and fresh combinations — thinkers must detach themselves from existing forms, they must escape the confining constraints of the usual, the expected, the well known. But at the same time, creators must care deeply about understanding, about mastering a technique, about rerendering meanings. They must be both detached from the available and committed to the novel.

In like manner people must be both passionate and decorous to create. They must be able to let ideas go winging away in the arms of passion vaulting and flowing till the mind has explored all the ramifications. They must thrill to the expansion of ideas perceiving the beauty inherent in intertwining relationships. But in Bruner's words:

There is a decorum in creative activity: a love of form, an etiquette toward the object of our efforts, a respect for materials. It is decorum that allows the creating mind to control the wild and passionate flow of ideas and give them shape. (1962 pp 24-25)

Explaining the third paradox inherent in creative activity: freedom/domination. Dr Bruner describes the point at which a poem in the process of being created takes form. The poem in the process becomes an entity in its own right, an externalized object, something out there that begins to dominate the writer, compelling him/her to complete it. The creating poet begins to serve the poem — rather than the poem serving the poet. When that happens, the writer is freed of defenses that prevent him/her from expressing innermost thoughts. Because the piece is out there, the writer can experiment with style and content without feeling vulnerable.

Deferral and immediacy are paradoxical aspects of creating. Creators have a wild flow of ideas that at times almost cry out to be expressed. They know what they want to say; they rush to record. But only occasionally, as Bruner reaffirms, does the piece come off lucky. Split finished in first draft in a form the writer likes. Bruner speaks of precocious completion, suggesting that deferral in producing a finished draft is generally a necessary part of creating. Writers must be able to stand back and look with a fresh eye.

**Involving Children in the Creating Act** Even a brief consideration of the paradoxical aspects of creating makes clear why school children need to be involved in the creative process. At some point in their lives children should experience the detachment from what is already known and the commitment to know more, the passion to fly with wild ideas and the decorum ultimately to control them, the freedom to express ideas and the sense of being dominated by those ideas, the need for immediate expression and the need to defer expression until the right words surface. By experiencing these oftentimes conflicting emotions, the individual becomes, as Bruner suggests, a whole person, discovering in the process the power and workings of the human mind.

Much of the original conceptualizing and researching on creative or divergent thinking was carried out by Getzels and Jackson (1962). Some of the exercises developed by these researchers to test creativity in children clarify what is meant by the term. Getzels and Jackson asked their subjects to give as many different usages of a stimulus word as they could. Faced with the stimulus *bolt*, some subjects gave a series of definitions such as: to fasten down, to secure, bolt a door, bolt a hatch on a ship. This series was scored as low on the creativity continuum. In contrast, a series such as: to fasten down to run away quickly, to eat food rapidly, a bolt of cloth, a bolt of lightning, a horse bolt, was ranked high, because responses were more varied.



See J. W. Getzels and P. W. Jackson, *Creativity and Imagination* (New York: Wiley, 1962).

broke out of the confines of the expected response—to fasten down A second exercise developed by Getzels and Jackson was to ask children to think of all manner of uses to which a particular object could be put Again children faced with the stimulus word *brick* were scored “low” on the creativity scale if they restricted themselves to the common and therefore anticipated usage — for building Students whose ideas flowed down novel avenues (use brick for doorstep, weapon, bed warmer, hammer) were scored “high” A third exercise asked students to write endings to a given fable, one ending was to be moralistic, a second, humorous, a third, sad The fable began

A man drove his donkey to the seaside, and having purchased a load of salt proceeded on his way home In crossing a stream the donkey stumbled and fell It was some time before he regained his feet, and by that time the salt had all melted away, and he was delighted to find that he had lost all his burden

A little while after that the donkey, when laden with sponges, had occasion to cross the same stream Remembering his former good luck, he stumbled this time on purpose (from Getzels and Jackson 1962)

Again judges ranked student responses by the extent to which the responses diverged from the expected

Getzels and Jackson's exercises can be used with students in middle elementary grades as an instructional rather than a testing tool A word like *bolt* (for example, *fair, grave, tender, duck, port*), placed on the board encourages students to brainstorm all kinds of associations in an anything goes atmosphere On another occasion object names like *brick* (for example, *tree, row boat, oar, a piece of rope, a blanket, a mushroom*) are the stimuli, students stretch their imaginations to think of wild ways these objects can be used — and the wilder the better! On still another occasion, young people think of novel endings to a fable or story, such as the one given, endings can be written on contemplation slips and shared orally with the class Participants talk about particularly unexpected endings in which thinkers originate a unique twist of events This type of session is a “Wild, Wild Thinking Spree”

It is in terms of the creating act rather than the creative writing act that one should first analyze Mr Dag and his sixth graders' search for ways in which cities and beehives are related Basically Mr Dag was involving his students in a “Wild, Wild Thinking Spree” as described above He began by asking young people to identify a relationship that does not exist, he was asking them to put together new and fresh combinations that diverge from the expected Because this was beginning work with wild, wild thinking, Mr Dag provided the unique relationship city=beehive Students had to think of words to support the wild relationship Only after they had had considerable opportunity to support novel relationships together did he ask them to dream up the “novel” on their own In essence Mr Dag was slowly helping children stretch the way they perceive the world he was involving them in the creating act



**Creative Writing.** Quite obviously through creative writing activity young people can come to know the pleasures to be found in playing with ideas, in searching for and discovering novel relationships in thinking that goes beyond the ordinary into the realm of the fantastic. Then too creative writing is one of the expressional arts—arts that include dance, music, sculpture, photography, drawing, painting, story writing, poetry writing—through which, as Harold Rugg (1947) noted many years ago, "We say what we feel with form. As people write story and poem, they make highly personalized statements about how they perceive the world, and they put their perceptions into a form that communicates what Einstein has called a highly simplified and intelligible picture of the world."

Conceived within this context creative writing is one place where schools should be asking young people to look closely at the world of reality and the world of fancy and make personalized statements to go beyond the obvious perception and juxtapose ideas not normally associated. Seen in this way, creative writing is as much a divergent thinking activity as it is a writing activity.

But teachers of writing are concerned as well with creativity of expression. When people write, they do try for originality of ideas, this is the first way that creativity manifests itself in writing. When people write, in addition, they try for originality in the way they phrase those ideas—the second manifestation of creativity in writing. Actually there is at times as much creativity in the choice of words, in the way writers build words together to communicate ideas, and in the organization of thought units as there may be in the relationships embodied in the ideas themselves.

Because creativity manifests itself not only in ideas but also in the forms through which writers communicate those ideas, to teach creative writing is also to teach ways of playing with words that tease the senses and the mind. The impact of writing may well come from the unique turning and twisting of a phrase, teachers must encourage children to play with sound and meaning relationships as part of their writing adventure in wonderland. Only when young people sense that writing creatively depends in large measure on their ability to do wild things with words and only when young people feel free to express their word wildnesses will they be able to end the fable supplied by Getzels and Jackson as one young man did: "The ass broke his bloomin' ass." Fortunately for him, his teacher knew that creativity manifests itself in word wildness and encouraged rather than discouraged such inventive plays on words.

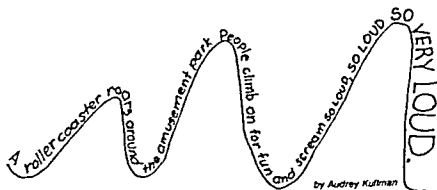
Creativity in expression extends too to the way writers build words into verbal pictures. Some writers create images with words so vivid that in the reader's mind a picture projects that is as real as a picture painted with oils. Some writers form words together with such artistry that the result is sheer beauty. The words become a dynamic, flowing whole that keeps the reader spellbound. To teach creative writing is to develop awareness of the beauty and power of words and provide opportunities for young people to attempt vividness and beauty in expressing.



An interesting way of  
connecting poems is Robert  
Froman Street Poems  
(New York: Dutton 1971)

A third way that creativity manifests itself in writing is in the design of words on paper. Sometimes especially in the writing of poetry the manner in which words are laid out is striking and original, assisting in communicating the message of the piece to the reader. In such cases the verbal blends perfectly with the visual so perfectly that the reader is struck by the sheer novelty and appropriateness of the relationship. Numbers of writers both past and present have drawn upon the visual to achieve a striking impact with words. One of the earliest experimenters with this different way of doing things in poetry was George Herbert (1593–1633). Herbert wrote and designed a poem entitled ‘The Altar’ in which the poem appears as an altar on the page: the first four lines extend to form the altar surface, the next eight represent the altar pedestal, and the last four are shaped as the heavy supporting base. Today many writers young and old are experimenting with such creative visual-verbal relationships. On a playful level is a novelty poem entitled ‘Roller Coaster’ by Audrey Kullmann, an elementary grade youngster:

FIGURE 7.1 A Roller Coaster



On a much more sophisticated level is e. e. cummings work in which words flow physically into one another and in which sentences break in unique ways. Seeing the writings of e. e. cummings the reader knows that he/she is making contact with creativity in action — a creativity based to some extent on relationships between word and visual images.

**Putting the Pieces Together: The Act of Creating/The Act of Writing** In the preceding section three ways in which creativity manifests itself in writing have been described. They are:

- 1 the ideas expressed. Creative ideas are fresh views, new combinations, personal ways of looking at the world.
- 2 the manner in which ideas are expressed. Creative forms of expression are those that juxtapose words not commonly found together, twist phrases in unique ways, paint word pictures with vividness and beauty.
- 3 the manner in which words are laid out on paper. Creative forms of word design are those that strikingly relate word and visual images in novel patterns.

In language programs students experiencing the act of writing should make contact with creative ideas creative forms of expression and creative forms of word design Let us now consider specific activities through which teachers can involve students in the creating act especially as creating relates to writing

### Creating Ideas

Teachers can ask youngsters to stretch their imaginations to dream up the fantastic or the unusual Lower elementary students enjoy excursions into the realm of the imaginary They glory in make believe characters and far-fetched plots Besides enjoying the imaginary upper elementary students appreciate activities that invite them to relate the unrelatable, to concoct the wild even to talk with a forked tongue saying just the opposite of what they mean Playing with metaphors and similes with personification with hyperbole and sarcasm young people can create relationships that are both unusual and playful

**Stretching the Mind with the Fantastic** Lois Nichols read the first chapter of William O Steele's *Davey Crockett's Earthquake* to her third



Talking together as part of an early writing experience



grade class In this chapter is a description of an imaginary animal, and story characters are warned to be on the alert for this wild creature Following the reading, the third graders talked about inventing their own imaginary critters, they decided they too would write descriptions to warn others about the approach of these wild beasts from 'Mars, the moon, and other places " and to explain how to trap the monsters

Justin described a Rumblebumblegagoon

His name is Rumblebumblegagoon Well, this thing has twenty four eyes and eighteen legs He is twenty feet long and is an inch tall Rumblebumblegagoon has one arm with fingers and one arm without and that is weird Now the only way to kill him is to take a rotten egg and drop it That will cause an earthquake and he will get smaller and smaller and then disappear!

Justin Kinney, January 9, 1976

Justin sketched on paper his conception of Rumblebumblegagoon and attached his written description to his wild sketch Ms Nichols bound the sketch and paper along with those of the other students as a large folio that the children entitled "The Big Book of Critters "

Like Lois Nichols, Antoinette Mistretta read a story to her students to introduce them to the fantastic Ms Mistretta set the stage for story listening by holding up two tin cans with tops, bottoms, and labels removed She asked the six students in her listening/thinking/writing group to decide what she was holding Most participants stuck to the real and said, "Two tin cans " Without a change of expression Ms Mistretta shook her head and assured the youngsters that the object she was holding was "an anything thing " Holding the "anything thing " tightly in both hands, she told them this story of her own authoring

### *The Anything Thing*

There once was a boy named Tommy Tenpenny He had a most unique toy He called his toy 'The Anything Thing ' Tommy used his anything thing for just about anything he could think of Everyday he had a different adventure with his anything thing

One day Tommy Tenpenny's anything thing became a telescope He could see very far away because his anything thing was not like an ordinary telescope It was much more powerful, he could see much farther

That day Tommy was on the moon He took out his telescope to look down at the earth He was watching some of his friends playing in their backyard when all of a sudden someone — something — grabbed him from behind It was a moon creature! It had four big yellow eyes green scaly skin horns and fire coming from its nose Tommy Tenpenny thought quickly He turned his anything thing into a club and began hitting the moon monster as hard as he could Finally Tommy hit it in the nose Moon monsters can't stand being hit in the nose so it ran away as fast as its stubby legs could carry it

Tommy Tenpenny decided that it was too dangerous to stay on the moon He closed his eyes put his anything thing in his back pocket and wished very hard to be back home in his own room When Tommy opened his eyes he was in his bedroom sitting on his own bed with his anything thing behind him

Books about imaginary animals to kick off a "Creatures from Outer Space" session  
*How the Sendar Where the Wild Things Are* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963)  
 George Mendoza  
*Glygoofang* (New York: Dial, 1963)  
 Bruce Bja's *The Groober* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967)  
 Sandoz Warburg *From Ambleton to Zumbledon* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1963)

After listening to the story of Tommy Tenpenny, the children brainstormed other possible uses of the anything thing and possible names for Tommy's sister, who also owned an anything thing. Working from their brainstormed ideas, they went on to write other adventures with the anything thing.

**Stretching the Imagination with Stories, Books, and Poems.** Other stories, books, and poems can carry children into the realm of wild thinking. Here are a few examples:

- 1 **Crazy Questions** Tomi Ungerer's *Ask Me a Question*<sup>7</sup> is filled with silly questions to which there are obviously no answers because the questions are so ridiculous — questions like "Why are sea horses fidgety on Fridays?" Children reacting to this book can write their own mind-boggling questions.
- 2 **Fantastic Yarns to Spin** Some books like Pat Thomas' 'Stand Back,' *Said the Elephant*, "I'm Going to Sneeze" embody a fantastic concept, for who — after all — has ever thought of elephants being related to sneezing? Children can dream up equally fantastic happenings and perhaps go on to write these happenings into stories. Can you conceive of —

a giraffe trying to get through a low doorway?  
 a porcupine walking through a crowded department store?  
 a skunk attending a birthday party?  
 a bumblebee with a sore throat?  
 a lion with dandruff?  
 a turtle with a cold?  
 a tiger with a hangnail?

Any of these conceptions can be the base for a fantastic yarn.

- 3 **More Yarns** A book by Polly Cameron 'I Can't,' *Said the Ant* presents an equally fantastic situation — spiders and ants putting a broken teapot together and lifting it back on the table. Children who have listened to a story like this one invent other equally impossible tasks that spiders and ants could perform in a similarly outlandish way. They borrow the titles of some of Ms. Cameron's other books: *The Cat Who Thought He Was a Tiger*, *The Cat Who Couldn't Purr*, *The Dog Who Grew Too Much*, *The Boy Who Drew Birds*. Children can create original stories to go with these titles or they can try title variations they invent themselves. One young man created "The Teakettle Who Lost Its Whistle" as his novel variation on one of Polly Cameron's titles, another thought of 'The Pig Who Thought He Was a Prince.'
- 4 **Wild Whys** Students in middle elementary grades think up far-fetched explanations of everyday occurrences. A book such as Arlene Mosel's *Tikki Tikki Tembo* is a springboard for this kind of creating. *Tikki Tikki Tembo* tells why "the Chinese have always thought it wise to give their children little short names instead of great long names." Students dream up way out explanations to tell



An introduction to the world of the imagination for intermediate students is Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (New York: Macmillan, 1871). Read orally the part where Alice goes through the glass. Students can write what they think they would find through the looking glass through the telescope through the microscope through the backward time machine or through the forward time machine.



Other yarns for upper graders: Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (New York: Macmillan, 1865); Richard Bach, Jonathan Livingston Seagull (New York: Macmillan, 1970); Richard Adams' *Watership Down* (New York: Macmillan, 1975); E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952); Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (Tatlowa, N.J.: Scribner, 1933).



A fine source of wild why  
 poems is Rudyard  
 Kipling *Just So Stories*  
 (New York: Doubleday/  
 1972)

Why a week has seven days  
 Why people read from left to  
 right  
 Why water runs downhill  
 Why a foot is called a foot  
 Why people have hearts  
 Why the thunder roars  
 Why there is a leap year

Why a day has twenty-four hours  
 Why a mosquito bites  
 Why spiders build webs  
 Why people are two-eyed,  
 two-eared, and one-mouthed  
 Why the dinosaur disappeared  
 Why the firefly flashes  
 Why the amoeba is too small  
 to be seen

5 *Wild Ifs* In the manner of Liesel Skorpen, who wrote *If I Had a Lion*, children can think about what they would do if — They can play with ridiculous possibilities such as, *If I Had a Mite*, *If I Had a Rhino*, *If I Had a Polar Bear*. They can go on to consider equally ridiculous thoughts such as, *If I Were As Tall As the Empire State Building*, *If I Were As Tiny As a Flea*, *If I Could Fly Like a Bird* — or similar wild ifs of their own creation

6 *Double Trouble* Eve Merriam's poem "Double Trouble" provides an idea for creating. Ms. Merriam tells that "A scissor and a trouser were discussing their woes" — the woe of being a member of a pair and of never being alone. Children think of other things that people tend not to associate but that do share a common element. Once young people have identified "unrelated but related" objects, they write 'bemoaning double-trouble' poems and stories in which the objects cry on each other's shoulders bemoaning a common predicament. For example, a class can go on a wild thinking spree in which children consider problems shared by a pair of panty hose and a chicken, by a truck and an elephant, by a clock and a tv set, by a needle and a door. In each of the preceding pairs, there is a shared feature that can be the idea for a story or poem that young people go on to write individually or in groups.

7 *Tell It Tall* The success of tv programs such as "The Bionic Woman" and "The Six Million Dollar Man" attests to the continuing appeal of tall tales — stories in which a hero or heroine performs impossible feats. Upper graders who have read about Paul Bunyan and John Henry or who have viewed modern day counterparts on tv can stretch their imaginations to identify outrageous feats that their own make believe tall tale characters can perform. To go with the brainstormed feats, young people brainstorm wild character names like the Cosmic Boy, Mighty Mac, Tremendous Tillie who will perform the feats, they write original tall tales about these characters. Sessions in which youngsters brainstorm and write tall tales can be called A Tall Tale Think Tank.

8 *Into the Far Out* In a similar way current science fiction viewed on tv, ( *Star Trek* ), or in a story like *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle is a stepping stone into creating fantastic ideas for voyages into space. In writing science fiction, young people may have to invent wild and different space creatures, describe happenings on other planets where Earth's laws governing light, sound, and gravity do not apply, and invent space hardware to take space voyagers



See Eve Merriam *It  
 Doesn't Always Have to  
 Rhyme* (Wolfe City, Tex:  
 Atheneum, 1965)



Use sound filmstrips of tall  
 tale classics "Paul  
 Bunyan," "Pecos Bill,"  
 "John Henry" to start  
 children thinking "tall." A  
 strip is available through  
 Teaching Resources  
 Films 17, Kisco, New  
 York.

on their journey Young people begin with oral creating, brainstorming creatures, phenomena, and hardware This thinking session is a Journey into the Far Out

- 9 **Whodunit?** Along the same lines, encourage young people to create the intertwining and unexpected relationships that are at the heart of a good mystery story As a beginning develop the vocabulary of mystery stories by having students read or listen to a few A simple one for younger boys and girls is James and Ruth McCrea's *The Birds*, a more complex mystery is Jean George's *Who Really Killed Cock Robin* Students identify mystery words and write them onto a word thingumajig words like *queer, disturbing, clues evidence, guilty, innocent, detective, hid followed unknown, strange, solved, solution, frightening, poked* When mystery writers have a word pool from which to draw, supply a list of unrelated clues Writers select three from the list that will become major strands to be intertwined in their stories



Young writers will enjoy reading Marjorie Sharmat's *Nate the Great Goes Undercover* (New York: Dutton, 1975) It is a picture storybook

### Whodunit?

Select three clues from the list below Build these clues into a suspense-filled mystery Be sure to think about who your chief investigator will be Describe him/her In writing your story use the word *eccentric* just once

#### Clues Unrelated Clues Unrelated Clues Unrelated Clues Unrelated Clues

- |                               |                         |                                           |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| a barking dog                 | a stopped clock         | a crumpled note                           |
| a warm stove                  | a dirty cup in the sink | a puddle of water on the floor            |
| a marked map                  | an empty drawer         | a pair of broken glasses                  |
| an open safe                  | a missing picture       | a ray of light coming from under the door |
| a fingerprint on the door jam | a secret rendezvous     | a cat in an empty house                   |
| a package                     | a can of garbage        | a tape recording                          |
| a forced door                 | a smashed lock          | footprints in the mud                     |
| tree marks in the snow        | a missing ring          | a late guest                              |
| tapping noises                | a squeaking door        | dying embers in the grate                 |
| a ripped jacket               | a cut cable             | a broken window                           |
| a lost pen                    | an open book            | a circled word                            |

**Creating the Uncommon Relationship.** As writers and speakers build the comparisons that are the substance of metaphors, similes, and analogies, as they assign human attributes to nonhuman things, and as they overstate, understate, and sarcastically state, they are attempting the uncommon. Although writers must beware of relying overly on figures of speech and although producing striking figures is a most difficult task, in teaching ways of thinking creatively, figurative language offers fine opportunities for playing with unusual relationships.

**Personification** To her fifth grade class Emilia Muglia read Elphinstone Dayrell's *Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky*. As she read the folktale, she shared only one of Blair Lent's pictures, the one describing fish as "the Water's people." The fifth graders just listened and enjoyed.

When Ms. Muglia finished reading the tale, she asked "Is this a true story?"

The young people giggled, answering with an unanimous "No!"

Then Emilia Muglia asked the natural follow-up question "Why do you say that this story could not have happened?" The fifth graders talked of things that the sun and moon just do not do in 'real life.' In the folktale the sun and moon talk, build a house, smile. The water lives in a house, and the fish are referred to as people. As pupils gave specific items like these, the teacher listed them on the board. Analyzing the listing, the pupils decided that each item was actually a human characteristic, they concluded that the reason the tale was unreal was that things acted like people. In talking the teacher interjected the term *inanimate*, and soon the fifth graders were explaining that the writer had "endowed inanimate objects with human qualities."

When students had begun to develop a conception of personification, the teacher suggested, "Let's compare sun activities to human activities." On a piece of charting paper, she wrote headings for two columns: *Sun Actions - Human Actions*. The fifth graders identified actions that the sun actually performs, these they listed in the first column. Then they identified words used to refer to similar acts of people. The resulting comparison chart looked like this:

| Sun Actions            | Related Human Actions      |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| rises                  | wakes up gets up stretches |
| sets                   | goes to sleep goes to bed  |
| is overcast            | is sad                     |
| goes behind the clouds | is shy and hides           |
| is shining             | is happy                   |
| moves across the sky   | skips runs walks rides     |
|                        | rushes drives              |

→  
Finding relationships  
between inanimate objects  
and human beings





An example of personification  
The sun runs  
across the sky  
to hide  
behind the clouds

After brainstorming, students worked together in small groups to write a single paragraph in which they used human action words to describe the sun

In the week that followed, children wrote original folktales, at a writing station captioned 'The Personification Place' the teacher listed a few titles to stimulate thinking How the Rainbow Found a Pot of Gold at Its End, How the Stars Came to Fill the Sky How the Moon Came to Rule the Evening Sky, How the Sky Became Friends with the Earth, How the Lightning and Thunder Made Peace, How the Sun Came to Drive Away the Darkness Children could select one of these titles or invent one of their own First they identified human action words that could be applied to each of their story characters, listing the words on a sheet that structurally resembled the chart they had concocted as a class They drew human words from their charts as they composed Working in The Personification Place, Tami wrote

### *A Star Winked*

One night I saw a star flashing so I got up and looked out at the sky The star looked like it winked Do you want to know why it winked? I'll tell you The star was making eyes at the moon The star went a little closer to the moon and kissed it Then they disappeared behind a cloud The next night the sky was filled with stars

The End  
Tami fifth grade

Because young children are treated to many books that assign human characteristics to animals and objects, by the time they arrive in upper elementary grades, they find storywriting of this kind an easy vehicle for creating unique relationships

Teachers can introduce personification by focusing as this teacher did, on inanimate objects like rivers and brooks that can talk, giggle, whisper, skip, whistle , buildings that stare down, hold their heads erect, talk to the clouds , leaves that dance, jump hop, play tag , machines that sleep at night, scream, get tired, get hungry

A teacher can focus too on anthropomorphic animals that are endowed with ability to feel, think, talk, and live much in the manner of humans Children can create their own 'talking beast' stories working from titles such as

### *Easy Titles*

The Lion Who Stepped on His

Tail

How the Lion Came to Be King of  
the Beasts

The Giraffe Who Could Not Stop  
Hiccuping

The Unpopular Porcupine

How the Woodpecker Learned  
to Tap

The Forgetful Dinosaur

### *More Difficult Titles*

How the Badger Learned Not  
to Badger Her Friends

Why Clams Are Known for  
Clamming Up

Why the Chicken Is Known for  
Chickening Out

How the Weasel Learned to  
Weasel His Way Out of

Tight Corners

How the Bull Became a  
Professional Bull Thrower

### *Easy Titles*

How the Skunk Learned to Be  
Friends with the Other  
Animals

### *More Difficult Titles*

How the Turtle Outfoxed the  
Fox  
Why the Horse Is Good at  
Horsing Around

One fifth grade boy wrote the following piece in which parrots do human as well as impossible things

#### *How the Parrot Became a Friendly Yellow*

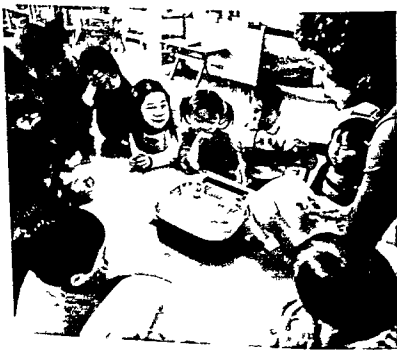
Once there was a parrot who had no friends because he was very dull. When the other parrots played games, they would never let the dull parrot play. He was very sad because he didn't have any friends. One day dull parrot tried to join into one of the games. He tried to be like the other parrots but the other parrots chased him away.

One day dull parrot was flying around thinking of how to make friends with the other parrots so they would let him play games. After a long time he thought of an idea. He decided to fly to the Sun and ask the Sun God to make him bright yellow. The Sun God, who was yellow himself, helped out. The bright yellow parrot flew back down to earth. He made friends with the other parrots and the parrots let him play the games with them. They thought he was the brightest parrot that ever lived.

Jeffrey Miller

*Metaphors and Similes* When students in Mr. Dag's class wrote "The city buzzed like a beehive," they were asserting a resemblance between city and beehive; they were creating a simile. They could

Creating together



have gone on to create other specific comparisons such as "The city is as crowded as a beehive and as noisy as a machine shop." If they had eliminated the *like* or *as* and developed a more compact comparison — "The city is a beehive" — they would have been creating a metaphor, which asserts a likeness but without the assistance of the words *like* and *as*. The simile and the metaphor are striking ways to think about unique relationships. Here are a few ideas for starting the thinking. The objective of these activities is not that children are able to recite the definitions of the terms or distinguish among forms. The objective is that children create the fresh combinations that are the substance of figures of speech.

- 1 **Your Metaphor Store** To meet the metaphor, students in upper elementary grades contemplate the possible ways that an equation such as *The Bram* = \_\_\_\_\_ can be completed. Possibilities

### Your Metaphor Store

**Task** \_\_\_\_\_ to concoct word equations

**Steps** \_\_\_\_\_ Think of umpteen possibilities through which you can complete each of the following word equations. After you have a lengthy listing for each equation, go back and star the one you think in each case is the most original of all you have created.

- 1 The road =
- 2 The steeple =
- 3 A large apartment =
- 4 A mushroom =
- 5 The heart =
- 6 The earth =
- 7 The clouds =
8. Lava =
- 9 A bulldozer =
- 10 A ray of light =
- 11 An automobile =

students may suggest include *a computer, a calculator, a book, a magazine, a house, a window, a well, a goldmine, a bank, a storehouse, a kite*. They should not stop before compiling a varied listing that includes some expanded phrases as well *a moving tape on which many words have been recorded, a window through which people stare out at the world*. Later students concoct metaphors individually. A sheet like the one given on page 241 can serve as the base for a learning station activity entitled *Your Metaphor Store*.

- 2 *Active Metaphors* Displaying an object such as a cane, a teacher can tell students it is not really a cane and then do something fantastic with it, such as sweeping the floor. Watchers must guess what the

FIGURE 7.2 Simile  
Series by a Second  
Grader

cane has become, the one guessing first must convert the cane into something else and pantomime that 'something else' using the cane. Young people are concocting active metaphors in this way. Other objects to use in pantomiming are a ballpoint pen, a ruler, a piece of cotton, an eraser, a handkerchief, or any classroom gadget.

- 3 **Sleuthing for Look Alikes** During a look-alike contest, young people vie to complete a simile in the most original way. They think about an incomplete simile each day, ones like *a sausage looks like, a pen-gun looks like, a porcupine looks like, a hummingbird looks like, a dandelion looks like, a centipede looks like, the Concorde looks like, his nose looks like, her eyes look like*. At the end of the day, pupils share their look-alikes as a daily team of judges selects the winner for the day.
- 4 **A Comparisons Collage** Students look for especially creative metaphors and similes as they read. In spare moments they thumb through magazines and newspapers stacked in the corner of the classroom searching for novel comparisons, then they clip and mount their finds on a collage-like chart of similes and metaphors.
- 5 **Threadbare Analogies** As a basis for brainstorming, a sheet can be devised listing expressions that pattern *as \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_* and that have been overworked to the point of meaninglessness. Cliches to include on the listing are *as white as new fallen snow, as smooth as ice, as quick as a wink, as soft as silk, as warm as toast, as happy as a lark, as high as a kite, as light as a feather, as deep as the sea, as blue as the sky, as deep as a well*. In small groups students identify numerous substitutes for the noun in each cliché. Once they have a pool of alternative expressions they decide on the one in each grouping that states the most vivid relationship. During a class talk-time, groups share the results of their brainstorming and deliberation.
- 6 **Creative Headlines** Classroom activities can be introduced with creative headlines. For example, on a day when students are concocting diamantes (see p. 199), a classroom marquee can announce "Today! A Do-It-Yourself Diamond Sale Grind Your Own!" After students in upper grades have read and reacted to several creative announcements, teams compose original headlines for classroom happenings. Similarly young people think up creative captions for bulletin boards.

**Overstatement and Sarcasm** Whereas schools can assist younger elementary students in devising the creative relationships of personification, they will probably restrict play with overstatement and sarcasm to students in grades five and above since such forms of expression depart radically from the literal. As the work of Piaget explains, young children tend to be rather literal in their thinking, relying on firsthand perceptions and impressions. By upper elementary grades, however, students rely less on direct perceptions, moreover, they begin to develop the finely honed sense of humor that is so basic in overstatement and sarcasm.

One teacher capitalized on upper graders' enjoyment of backhanded humor to involve her sixth graders in the intricacies of sarcasm. She

shared a short poem 'Presents,' which begins "I wanted a rifle for Christmas / I wanted a bat and a ball," and which line by line enumerates all the items a young person wants for Christmas — items that include skates bicycle, whistle, kite But the one item that is wanted not "one little bit" is a pair of mittens Although the poem does not explicitly state the gift received, it is obvious what the present received is This teacher asked her students to write backhanded thank yous to the favorite aunt who sends the mittens, letters were to ooze with humor based on the conflict between the true feeling of the recipient and the conventions of polite correspondence Gev Riemer alias Joe Namath, laid on the sarcasm in a thick layer as he wrote to his hypothetical Aunt Nancy

92 Hudson Avenue  
Maplewood New Jersey 07040  
December 18 1978

Dear Aunt Nancy

Thank you for the mittens again Thanks for getting me a plaid pair this time They were different from the striped pair you gave me for my birthday

The thing I like best is that they don't fit me, but it was the thought that counts

Just because you give me a pair of mittens three times a month even in spring and summer is beside the point Don't think because I have a foot ball uniform but not a football — don't think I want one (I do! I do! I do! Don't think I'm getting married)

Sincerely yours  
Gev Riemer, alias Joe Namath

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Locate a story, a poem, or a filmstrip that invites youngsters to stretch their imaginations and consider the fantastic Decide how you will use that particular material to trigger creative ideas to be written down Use it with a group
- Follow Ms Mistrretta's lead (see p 234) and compose an original story to share with youngsters Think of some way of involving children in talk or writing after they have listened to your story
- Devise an original activity that will involve upper graders in composing poems that endow inanimate objects with human qualities Try the activity with a group

### Expressing Creatively Through Poetry

How writers say something is at times as important as what they say Let us talk next about ways of engaging children actively in creative expression of ideas Let us talk about ways to assist children in writing that expresses pictures through words, in writing that has a nice ring about it, in writing that gains impact from inventive twisting of phrases and ing from sound meaning relationships

**Painting Word Pictures in Poetry.** It is in poetry that writers create the most striking pictures from words, and it is, therefore, through poetry that teachers help students appreciate the beauty of word pictures and create vivid images of their own. Children should not begin by analyzing the images in a poem to the bone, dissecting the metaphors and similes, defining words, explaining relationships, and identifying the who, the what, the when. The analytic approach carried to extreme may account for many students' aversion to poetry.

A different beginning is to ask children to listen to a poem with eyes closed and visualize in the mind's eye the picture that the poet is painting with words. As a starter, poems like Lewis Carroll's "The Crocodile," in which the image is easy to grasp, will appeal.

### *The Crocodile*

How doth the little crocodile  
Improve his shining tail  
And pour the waters of the Nile  
On every shining scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin  
How neatly spreads his claws  
And welcomes little fishes in  
With gently smiling jaws

Slightly older boys and girls appreciate the images in Christina Rossetti's "What Is Pink?"

### *What Is Pink?*

What is pink? a rose is pink  
By a fountain's brink  
What is red? a poppy's red  
In its barley bed  
What is blue? the sky is blue  
Where the clouds float through  
What is white? a swan is white  
Sailing in the light  
What is yellow? pears are yellow  
Rich and ripe and mellow  
What is green? the grass is green  
With small flowers between  
What is violet? clouds are violet  
In the summer twilight  
What is orange? why an orange  
Just an orange

Having visualized a poem like one of these, middle graders can put their "vision" on paper through an art medium they select. Listeners to "The Crocodile" may pick the bright greens and blues of tempera paint to translate Lewis Carroll's compact verbal image into picture. Listeners to "What Is Pink?" may concentrate on just one of the pictures that Christina Rossetti's words conjure up and color with chalk to express the picture on paper. A splendid source of poems for translating into pictures is May Hill Arbuthnot's *Children and Books*. In it are poems like Elizabeth Coatsworth's "May Morning." William



A stimulating sound filmstrip from Lyceum Productions called "The Crystal Cavern" is useful for introducing the relationship between words and pictures to upper graders. The introduction is through Colendge's "Kubla Khan." Available from Baker and Taylor, Drawer 2, Momence, Illinois.



From Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*



Keep available the picture book version illustrated by Jose Aruego. Christina Rossetti: *What Is Pink?* (New York: Macmillan, 1971).

*Free Thoughts* Perhaps the easiest form in which children can create striking word pictures is the unstructured line or two — what can be called a *free thought*. Here is a free thought by a fourth grader, who was asked to close her eyes and describe as clearly as she could a picture she saw only in her mind's eye, it was recorded for her by a scribe so that she could keep her eyes tightly closed and keep her picture clearly in mind.

*Karen's Thought*

I see Musty Diano  
She has long black hair to the floor  
She has silver in her hair and uses it to mop  
She has long eyelashes and uses them for paintbrushes  
Her fingernails are like swords one mile long  
Musty Diano sweeps the floor with her hair and sings a song

When Karen opened her eyes, with watercolor she painted her word picture on paper, next to her picture of Musty Diano, she wrote in her own hand the thought she had just spoken out, changing the thought somewhat as she rewrote it.

A raindrop  
falls  
in a puddle  
and is gone  
A second grader's  
thought

Children like Karen who "speak out" word pictures while a scribe records the thoughts in poetic form are taking a first step toward composing free verse — verse in which image is more important than rhyme, rhythm, or syllable pattern. Gwen's teacher introduced students to free verse by asking them to consider what clouds look like. They started by fingerpainting clouds from blue and white paint, adding a little black. Then they translated their paintings into words. Gwen wrote:

*Clouds*

Clouds are like wispy balls of cotton  
stuck on a piece of light blue tissue paper  
Sometimes they get angry and make an awful rumpus  
They move really fast. It gets dark and gray  
But on a nice warm day, the clouds are airy and  
make pictures in the sky like bunnies  
and horses and bells  
Then I like to lie down and find the pictures  
in the clouds

Many teachers have found that art is a natural bridge into free verse. Students can begin with art forms that tend to relax one — fingerpainting, molding clay, sculpting soap. Through the chosen art medium, young artists express a thought or feeling, which they then put into words. Later they take their boxes of watercolors and drawing paper out-of-doors to paint a scene that strikes the fancy — a scene they will eventually paint with words.





See Edward Putzar  
*Japanese Literature*  
 (Tucson: University of  
 Arizona Press 1973) and  
 Harold Henderson, *An  
 Introduction to Haiku* (New  
 York: Doubleday Anchor  
 1958)

**The Haiku** In recent years elementary teachers have been inviting students to compose *haikus*, three-line verses which in the hands of Japanese poetmasters of the seventeenth century became delicate instruments for expressing feelings and pictures about nature and especially about seasonal variations. Through their haikus the early poetmasters attempted to grasp the essential quality or essence of reality, and to achieve "direct and lucid expression of this reality." As Edward Putzar, a historian of Japanese literature, has explained, "The power to reach this goal of understanding lies within a child." The fact that children tend to speak with directness and to see the essence of things probably accounts to some extent for the success many youngsters have had in creating haiku moments. Success relates also to the brevity of the form — just 17 syllables that pattern in three lines 5 — 7 — 5.

To inspire her sixth graders to look for the essential quality within a nature scene and to express it with directness, one teacher snipped a series of small-sized Japanese prints from a book purchased just for this purpose. Each child who felt inspired selected a print to think and write about. Lynn selected a delicate lotus and created this haiku

The pink swamp flower  
 Has a beauty of its own —  
 A heavy fragrance

Judi selected a vibrantly colorful print of a wild horse and composed

Horse runs endlessly  
 Searching through the golden hills,  
 He looks for the herd

Because a haiku is comparable to a single image captured on film as the camera shutter opens for an instant, colored pictures are a practical material for triggering the word pictures that are the stuff of haiku — particularly film strips that present a series of pictorial *long poems* — nature shots glorifying the beauty of earth. Students can loan 35 mm slides of nature scenes their families may have taken, if a teacher owns slides, he/she contributes a few too. Youngsters go to a View a Haiku station to study the slides through a viewer and respond to one in a haiku. Some of the full color filmloops being produced are just as useful, especially ones that picture colorful and moving animals, sights to be seen on a nature walk, effects of the changing seasons. A poetmaster selects one from the multitude of images viewed at the station to translate into a word picture.

**The Tanka** The *tanka* (or the *waka*, as it is called in Japanese poetry circles) is considerably more popular in Japan than is the haiku and is also much older, dating to the fourth century. As with the haiku, the *tanka* achieves its poetic flavor through the musical quality of the words and the beauty of the images painted. The topic is nature and the seasons, the form, short, in this case 5 lines of 31 syllables distributed according to the pattern 5 — 7 — 5 — 7 — 7. Because the *tanka*



Filmed materials to  
 simulate haiku moments  
 The Day Is Two Feet  
 Long — a full-color film  
 available through Weston  
 Woods  
 Designs in Nature — a  
 full-color filmstrip with  
 musical accompaniment  
 available through Nasco  
 Haiku: the Mood of Earth  
 and "Haiku: the Hidden  
 Glimmering" by Ann  
 Atwood — full-color sound  
 filmstrips available through  
 Lyceum



A delightful book of  
tanka

Virginia Owen Baon ed  
The Seasons of Time (New  
York Dal 1968)

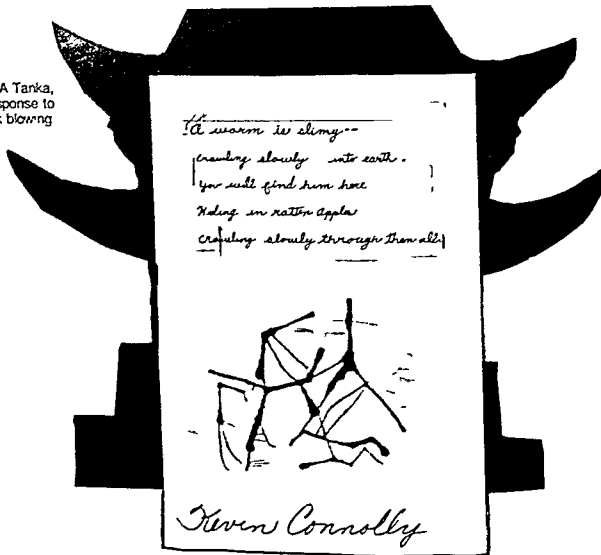
A book of modern tankas  
Lucy F. Brown trans  
Sounds from the Unknown  
(Chicago Swan 1963)

is a bit longer than the haiku, it permits an expanded word picture just as a camera equipped with a wide-angle lens permits photographs that encompass a larger view Here is a sample that abides by one of the original traditions of Japanese poetry It names a season

Crystal ice daggers  
Glisten in the winter trees —  
Bending branches down  
I listen for gusting wind  
I hear sharp icicles fall

Because traditional tankas have expressed seasonal thoughts, it is possible to combine firsthand seasonal observations with writing of the Japanese characters and words for the seasons To introduce the form, one teacher takes young people out-of doors to see and feel some striking moment in nature — perhaps a wild flower just breaking into bloom, a birds' nest hidden in a remote corner, a clear puddle

FIGURE 7-3 A Tanka,  
drawn in response to  
an original ink blowing



that reflects the sky, colored leaves falling snow sitting on fence posts after a storm As a class, they capture the nature-moment on polaroid film and then in a tanka As children compose together, this teacher encourages use of the seasonal word — autumn, winter, spring, summer — as a describing word or adjective, in the manner of the early Japanese poetmasters

When students have composed a seasonal tanka together, the teacher introduces the Japanese character and word for the season through a large chart of the symbols as shown in the margin As children go on individually to discover other nature-moments and capture them in original tankas, they inscribe the tankas on long narrow scrolls no wider than 10 cm across On their scrolls, off center at top and bottom, they paint in black the Japanese character and word for the season they are experiencing and describing Children mount each end of their individual scrolls on a dowel so that the scrolls can be rolled up as Japanese scrolls commonly are

*The Senryu* According to the *Columbia Encyclopedia* the *senryu* is a Japanese poem structurally similar to the haiku but concerned with human rather than physical nature Oftentimes it is humorous, some times it does not meet the syllable requirements of the haiku Working within the *senryu* form, students can choose topics for writing that perhaps appeal to them more than do daffodils, snow, and autumn leaves — topics like surfing, playing baseball, bicycling If they apply the syllable requirements of the haiku loosely, they have a form in *senryu* that still requires directness and clarity but allows a great deal of freedom for expression

Skung down the mountain  
I cut myself in half  
To avoid a tree

A small English/Japanese dictionary will captivate young poetasters A pocket-size version gives Japanese equivalents in both script and characters for terms like *baseball*, *bicycle*, *circus* mother — any one of which could be the subject of a *senryu* Students can search an English/Japanese dictionary for words that are the topics of their *senryus* and paint the Japanese equivalents in both script and characters on their poetry page

*Cinquain* Although the *cinquain* is not of Japanese origin, it is often associated with haiku and tanka because of its brevity As developed by Adelaide Crapsey, *cinquains* consist of five thought lines that follow a 2 — 4 — 6 — 8 — 2 syllable pattern for a total of 22 syllables Some teachers have simplified this form so that number of words

The gull  
effortlessly  
glides on the downward breeze  
to land on the soft, sandy beach  
Quiet

John

春  
spring

夏  
summer

秋  
autumn

冬  
winter

rather than syllables per line is the major structural requirement of the cinquain

- first line = one word
- second line = two words
- third line = three words
- fourth line = four words
- fifth line = one word

Whichever way teachers introduce cinquain — in terms of syllables or numbers of words — they should stress the importance of painting a clear and direct picture and allow some variation from the pattern rather than demanding strict adherence to the structural requirements. They should experiment too with related forms. One is the reverse cinquain that patterns 2 — 8 — 6 — 4 — 2. A second is the pine tree cinquain in which the topic of the poem is the pine tree and the shape of the pine is sketched around the lines of the poem, the first short line forms the top of the tree with the last forming the base.

**Short Word Pictures** Here are a few other ways to motivate young people to compose short word pictures that are vivid and direct

- 1 *With All the Senses* In *Sounds from the Unknown* (1963), Lucille Nixon suggests that for haiku and tanka to be effective "images must be *real* and *true* (p. xvii). One must only write about oral, visual, olfactory, and muscle images that one has experienced." A teacher can provide firsthand experiences by bringing a little of the garden into the classroom: a red cabbage cut through the middle, a cauliflower or broccoli with leaves removed, a bright red tomato, a pineapple sliced from top to bottom, a melon cut in half, a stalk of asparagus, an apple cut to show the star in the middle. Children touch, smell, look, and even taste before creating word pictures of these fruits and vegetables.
- 2 *Action!* Some firsthand experiences have an action component. Into his classroom, Lee Hopkins brought a bee in a bottle. He let the bee escape through the window. Children translated this action moment into haikus. To spark action-moments for students, bring in one or more of these: a grasshopper hopping about, a worm crawling through soil, a centipede that stalks around, a chameleon that changes body color, a ladybug that crawls and flies.
- 3 *Zippering, Dancing, Rippling* To spark free thoughts, one child blows up a balloon and without tying the end, lets it zip. Children can record the action (from the blowing up to the zipping about) as an action-thought. On other occasions children can write action thoughts after they have seen the teacher inflate a balloon and stick it with a pin, have watched slinky action, or have licked lollipops. In like manner, they can write thoughts after having seen ripples dance across the water in a dish mounted on the surface of the overhead projector. By the way, doing this last activity, children can look up at the ceiling and describe the rainbows they see rippling there.
- 4 *Thoughts on* Students help carry into the room a large branch that has fallen from a tree, placing the branch in a corner of the classroom where poetasters go to concoct thoughts on a fallen

See Lee Hopkins *Pass the Poetry Please!* (New York: Criteria Press, 1972)

tree." In seashore areas where driftwood is readily available, children bring in pieces to be placed on a table where they go to write out "thoughts on a piece of driftwood." A student who owns a canary or tropical fish may loan it to the class for an afternoon so students can compose "thoughts on a caged-up canary" or "thoughts on a trapped fish." Children use any form they wish for their word pictures.

- 5 *Humorous Thoughts on . . .* Upper grade students can consider some far-out topics for word picturing "thoughts on an empty stapler, "thoughts on a pile of coffee grounds," "thoughts on a broken ruler," "thoughts on a burned-out light bulb." At a learning station items like a pile of coffee grounds, orange peels, a bottle of glue, a discarded candy wrapper, or a broken pencil are displayed. Each day the item placed in the display station changes. Students have the option of visiting the station to write original "thoughts on . . ." and at the end of the day sharing their thoughts with the class. "Thoughts on . . ." will probably be humorous, given the strangeness of the topic.

*Creating Writing that Rings* Edward Lear is known for his nonsense verse and the way he uses the sounds of words to create nonsense. Listen to the sounds in his "The History of the Seven Young Parrots."

The seven young Parrots had not gone far, when they saw a tree with a single cherry on it, which the oldest Parrot picked instantly, but the other six, being extremely hungry, tried to get it also. On which all the seven began to fight, and they scuffled

and huffed  
and shuffled  
and puffed,  
and muffed  
and buffed,  
and duffed,  
and shuffled,  
and guffed  
and bruffled,  
and screamed, and shrieked and  
squealed, and squeaked and clawed, and snapped, and bit and bumped,  
and thumped, and dumped, and slumped each other till they were all torn  
into little bits, and at last there was nothing left to record this painful inci-  
dent except the cherry and seven small green feathers  
And that was the vicious and voluble end of the seven young Parrots

Pieces like Lear's are ideal for oral sharing, students can hear the repeating sounds of *buffed* and *duffed*, *dumped* and *slumped*, *vicious* and *voluble*. Young people in upper elementary grades quickly see that when Lear wanted a word with a particular sound and there was none, he invented one. They quickly find places where rhyme and alliteration create the fun. And they soon want to try some of these sound effects in their own writing.



Find examples to share with upper graders in Stephen Dunning *Edward Lueders* and Hugh Smith comps *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle and Other Modern Verse and Some Haystacks Don't Even Have Any Needles and Other Modern Verse* (Glennview Ill. Scott Foresman 1967 1969)



For other similar stories see Edward Lear *The Complete Nonsense Book* (New York: Dodd Mead 1912)

*Repeating Sounds* Lear's nonsense verse is a goldmine of examples to sharpen students' perception of sounds in writing. Lear's nonsense alphabets include verses on each letter of the alphabet like these

A was once an apple pie  
Pidy  
Widy  
Tidy  
Pidy  
Nice insidy  
Apple pie!

and

H was once a little hen  
Henny  
Chenny  
Tenny  
Henny  
Eggsy any  
Little hen?

A teacher shares just three or four of these and then draws a letter of the alphabet at random from a hat. Youngsters decide on an object that begins with that letter and as a class concoct a verse filled with repetitive sounds and nonsense words relating to the chosen object. One group wrote

L was once a little lamb  
Lamby  
Pamby  
Wamby  
Lamby  
No hamby  
Little lamb?

Elementary students individually can go on to select letters from the hat and write their own verses which are compiled as a Nonsense Alphabet replete with black and white line sketches in the style of Lear.

Modern day poets also supply many other sound plays to share. Eve Merriam's *It Doesn't Always Have to Rhyme* belongs on every classroom poet tree—a table on which poetry books stand to form the shape of a fir tree. Ms. Merriam contributes a delightful piece called *A Jamboree for J* in which she tells about the letter j in lines like

It japes it jibes it jingles  
it jitters it jets

and in which she uses at least 28 words beginning with j.

Students can do similar alliterative and nonsense things with other letters of the alphabet. For example, after one group heard Ms. Merriam's piece they wrote *A Laugh on L* which began in the manner

See Eve Merriam: *There  
Is No Rhyme for Sister  
(No. 6 Cry Text)  
A Jamboree for J* (1962)



*Rhyming Plays, Couplets and Limericks* The Japanese forms of unrhymed verse developed because the Japanese language, filled with similar vowel sounds, does not lend itself to creative rhyming effects. Not so with the English language! It is rhyme as well as rhythm that accounts for the enduring popularity of some of the old-time favorites of the English language like the one that begins "one, two, buckle your shoe."

Some of these favorites can become the stepping stones through which youngsters first attempt simple rhymes of their own. For example, teacher and primary pupils can create original versions of 'One, Two, Buckle Your Shoe'. They start by brainstorming many words that end with the same sounds as the words *two, four, six, eight, ten*. The teacher writes possible rhyming words for each of these number words in five columns on the board, keeps in readiness cards already lettered with the alternate lines of the poem 'One, two', 'Three, four', 'Five, six', 'Seven, eight', 'Nine, ten,' and tapes these on a second board, leaving room beneath each for suggested rhyming lines. Drawing from their brainstormed pool of rhyming words, children put together original second lines to go with each of the number lines proposing many possible ones for each. Children independently can later select the lines they prefer to go with the number lines and print them up as their original version of the Rhyming Number Book. Results may resemble this which was written by a young group at Halloween.

One two  
The witch went boo!  
  
Three four  
She fell through the floor  
  
Five six  
She was in a fix  
  
Seven eight  
That was her fate

A similar pattern to use for follow-up is one in which the numbers sequence in threes rather than twos as in One, two, three / I broke my knee / Four, five six / Even older students will enjoy this type of rhyming play especially as an individual activity, they will go beyond rhyming pairs that begin Nine, ten and continue up through the twenties and thirties.

Children who have played with pairs of rhyming words in this way are composing *couplets*—two lines that rhyme together and are approximately the same length. Again it is sometimes fun to start as a class with a given line and dream up several possible rhyming second lines. Some of the first lines of less familiar nursery rhymes are easy to build into couplets. Once I saw a little bird      Higgledy piggledy, my black hen  
, ' Barber, barber, shave a pig      Fishy fishy in the brook  
, Little Robin Redbreast sat upon a tree      Of course youngsters are not told the familiar second lines at least until they have put together their own original pairs. Older children quite poss



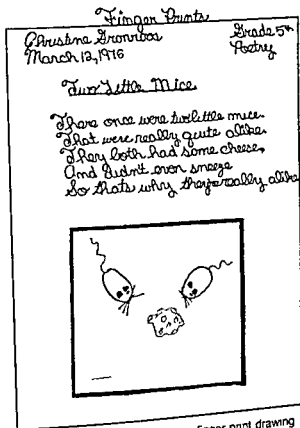


FIGURE 7-4

Rhyming poetry stimulated by a finger print drawing

ably will supply humorous second lines to complete the given first lines

With older students too there is fun in limericks especially if the introduction is an oral interpretation session in which each young person reads a limerick by the nonsense master Edward Lear. Because Lear's nonsense is so very old a teacher is free to duplicate his limericks and distribute them to students. A delightful one with which to begin is

There was an Old Man with a beard  
Who said 'It is just as I feared' —  
Two Owls and a Hen  
Four Larks and a Wren  
Have all built their nests in my beard

Participants in the oral interpretation are stationed in different areas and at different levels of the classroom — on chairs, desks, floor and stools — to call out their limericks according to a predetermined order. The result is a classroom Laugh In.

Children will quickly pick out the five line pattern of the limerick as well as discover the aabla rhyming pattern. Children tap out the rhythm of the Lears perhaps on rhythm band instruments so that


they feel the stress on second fifth and eighth syllables of each line Only after considerable oral work with limericks should young people try to compose some on their own Here is one by a fifth grade boy who had done much listening before writing

There once was a lady from Mars  
Who liked to drive old fashion cars  
She drove through the air  
With nary a care  
And never bumped into the stars

Joey Piseletta

**Summary** Although sound plays a primary role in the effectiveness of poetry it plays a role as well in the effectiveness of prose Sometimes when faced with two possible ways to structure a sentence, a writer selects one rather than the other simply because it sounds better Work with sound/meaning relationships prepares children to make such decisions as they gain sophistication as creative writers A primary purpose therefore of play with sounds of poetry is to develop heightened awareness of the significance of word music in communication

Here is a brief listing of capsule ideas for other related activities with word music

 Play with  
How much wood would a  
wood chuck  
If a woodchuck could  
chuck wood?  
Encourage similar plays  
with sound

- 1 **Alliterative Fun** Each child selects a verb with the same beginning sound as his/her first name to complete a sentence starting with the name for example *Dottie doodles Mary munches* All the alliterative lines constructed by individuals in the group are combined as a class pre poetry piece This kind of work is pre poetry in that the end product generally does not contain the clear images that are the essence of poetry
- 2 **More Alliterative Fun** On another day each child selects two words with the same beginning sound as his/her first name to complete a sentence starting with the name for example *Dottie doodles delight fully Mary munches merrily* Again children pool their sentences to form a class pre poetry piece
- 3 **Hear the Beat** Young people can read poetry orally to music with each contributing a short piece he/she has prepared in advance Students try to interpret their lines as expressively as they can varying pitch volume and intonation
- 4 **Anyone for a Quatrain?** Upper graders can compose a series of quatrains based on the beginning lines written by Carroll that start  
He thought he saw

He thought he saw a Buffalo  
Upon the chimney piece

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line does not rhyme)

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line rhymes with piece)

He thought he saw a Rattlesnake  
That questioned him in Greek

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line does not rhyme)

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line rhymes with *Greek*)

He thought he saw a Banker's Clerk  
Descending from the bus

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line does not rhyme)

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line rhymes with *bus*)

He thought he saw a Kangaroo  
That worked a coffee mill

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line does not rhyme)

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line rhymes with *mill*)

He thought he saw a Coach and Four  
That stood beside his bed

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line does not rhyme)

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line rhymes with *bed*)

He thought he saw an Albatross  
That fluttered round the lamp

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line does not rhyme)

\_\_\_\_\_ (this line rhymes with *lamp*)

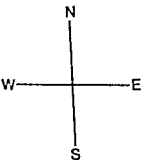
Young people will have fun completing the quatrains together. They start by identifying many words that rhyme with the ones indicated and by talking about all the wild things this fellow could have seen. Participants in the oral composing toss out a multitude of possible lines. Cooperatively the students decide which lines to include in their group poem. After the writing six students can print out the six stanzas of the poem, each on a large sheet of paper, they bind the pages to form a folio entitled 'Original Carrolls'. Individually children can go on to write other 'Really Original Carrolls' they concoct their own first lines beginning 'He thought he saw a \_\_\_\_\_', which they follow with three more nonsense-styled lines to form a quatrain. If students have trouble finding two words that rhyme, they follow Carroll's example and make up one that sounds just right.

5 **Calendar Couplets** Numbers of poems supply easy beginnings for student couplets and quatrains. For example, Sara Coleridge has written a series of Calendar Couplets in 'The Months' many of which begin with the name of the month as in—

January brings the snow,  
Makes our feet and fingers glow.

Children can continue "February brings . . ." "March brings . . ." and so forth, writing a couplet with that beginning. They find a picture to accompany each couplet, write each pair of lines on the appropriate picture, and order the pictures and lines to form a couplet calendar.

- 6 *Directional Couplets* Do you remember the old rhyme in which every other line begins identically?



When the wind is in the East,

\_\_\_\_\_ (the line rhymes with East)

When the wind is in the North,

\_\_\_\_\_ (the line rhymes with North)

When the wind is in the South,

\_\_\_\_\_ (the line rhymes with South)

When the wind is in the West,

\_\_\_\_\_ (the line rhymes with West)

Children complete the couplets so each pair rhymes together. If, after a number of class composing sessions, children try this activity as an individual one, they can attach their poems to the arms of a large hanging mobile in the shape of the directional symbol on which has been mounted the labels — North, South, East, and West. Or each youngster draws a large directional symbol and writes a pair of couplets along the appropriate line of the symbol — in other words, the East couplet along the rightward pointing line, the North couplet along the upward pointing arrow, and so forth.

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Devise an activity in which young students express feelings through both words and pictures. Try it with a group.
- Increase your own ability to use words expressively by writing an original free thought, a haiku, a tanka, and a cinquain.
- Increase your own ability to sense the music in words by composing an original couplet, quatrain, and limerick. If you are teaching, share your own poems with children so they see that you are doing some of the same things you are asking them to do.
- Design an activity that involves children actively in the fun of alliteration. Try the activity with a single child or a classroom group.
- Find at least one poem from which you can borrow a line or two to get children started writing couplets or quatrains.
- Read Edward Lear's *Complete Nonsense Book*, edited by Strachey (Dodd Mead 1912).

## Creating Picture/Word Relationships

According to Martin Gardner writing in the *Annotated Alice* Alice's *Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (Potter 1970), emblematic, or *figured*, verse has a long history within English literature. Poetmasters such as Robert Herrick and George Herbert as well as e e cummings and Dylan Thomas have written figured verse — poems inscribed so that the printing communicates something related to the subject. Perhaps the best known example is Lewis Carroll's "The Mouse's Tale." It is, of course, full of nonsense, and the fact that the poem resembles a mouse's tail is part of the fun.

'Fury said to  
a mouse, That  
he met in the  
house, "Let  
us both go  
to law /  
I will prose-  
cute you —  
Come I'll  
take no de-  
nial We  
must have  
the trial  
For really  
this morn-  
ing I've  
nothing  
to do  
Said the  
mouse to  
the cur  
Such a  
trial dear  
sir With  
no jury  
or judge  
would  
be was  
ing our  
breath"  
I'll be  
judge  
I'll be  
jury"  
said  
cous-  
ing  
old  
Fury  
"I'll  
be  
the  
count-  
ess  
and  
down  
me to  
down

Children delight in seeing, hearing, and composing poems in which words and visual images interrelate. Young children especially find the concrete more meaningful than the abstract — as the studies of Piaget have clearly shown.

# SHADOW

tiny


↑↑  
tent

SHOUT

**Visualizing Words.** A fun introduction into writing figured verse is to print out individual words and phrases so that something in the design relates to the meaning of word or phrase. Some words lend themselves easily to this picture-word play: *tall, thin, short, narrow, up, down, around, north, above and below, scared, shivery, dark, smile*. Others take a bit more imagination as shown in the margin samples that can be used as an invitation to children to play with words in similar fashion.

As Gardner points out in his notes to the *Annotated Alice*, this kind of creating is more significant than it may first appear. Advertisements, book jackets, magazine mastheads, signboards frequently heighten meanings through the design of words on a page. Students should be able to clip examples from magazines and newspapers to add to a bulletin board collection that includes samples they themselves have devised and proceed to write their own advertisements that include words made visual.

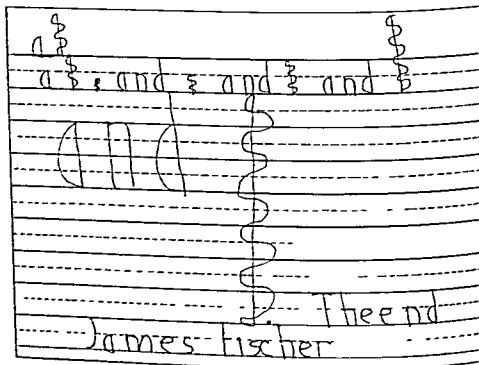
Once children have done some visualizing of words, they incorporate the technique in thoughts they are writing together or individually. They may decide to take just one word and express it visually whenever it occurs in the piece, as a first grader creatively did in his

story entitled "A Vine," or in visual language "A ."

If you have trouble reading James' message, it says, "A vine grew and grew and grew and grew and grew." He made the vine taller and taller to communicate growth.

Youngsters can visually express phrases as well. Phrases that are easy to express visually are those telling about direction or action. A sample is at the top of page 261.

FIGURE 7.5 A composition about a vine that grows



s  
i  
d  
e and h d e

Climb the jungle gym ladder

Then go swooping

d  
o  
w  
n  
t  
h  
e  
s  
l  
i  
d  
e

Follow me around circles  
Ouch now! Let's all run and

h d e

**Squiggling and Shaping** Squiggling is another device to introduce children to the fun of building words into concrete pictures. A squiggle is nothing more than a series of lines drawn on paper in a design so non representational that children can read their own impressions into it. One teacher begins the activity by giving children a series of lines on a duplicated sheet. In turn she asks youngsters to hold the sheet in each of the four directions and to brainstorm what the lines could represent in each case. Then they together choose one direction and idea brainstormed earlier and write a thought about that idea. Later on their printing the thought words along the squiggle lines. On their own they choose a different direction and write a thought based on their impression of what is represented in the squiggles when so viewed. On the next page is a squiggle from *Words Sounds and Thoughts* (Citation Press 1977) where the activity is described in detail. This particular squiggle works well because children can see in it not only fireworks but waves snakes worms water dripping down a windowpane jet trails in the sky anchors dropping from boats Spanish moss hanging from trees — depending of course on the direction from which they view it. Students can create any number of other squiggles that will be as productive. A few suggested ones are shown in the margin notes.

In addition the outline of an object like a car a pair of spectacles a pair of scissors a hand a shoe even a nose stimulates young people to create original word picture relationships and sometimes motivates the child who has little interest in written expression. Young people write a story or poem like piece and enscribe the lines along the perimeter of the shape drawn on paper or in lines that actually form the shape. One example to demonstrate shaping techniques is the Roller Coaster on page 232 of this volume.

**Patchwork Pieces** One writer has suggested that young people clip interesting words phrases and sketches from magazine and newspaper combine clippings into word pictures and arrange the word pictures on colored construction paper. Designing individual word

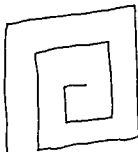
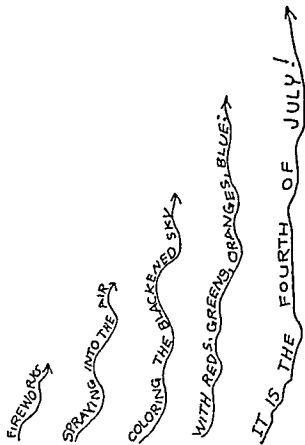


FIGURE 7.6 More Squiggles



SOURCE: Words, Sounds and Thoughts (Citation Press 1977)

Integrate dramatic and nonverbal expression children can walk as the tiger walks walk as the porcupine does

clippings into a total message forces one to consider visual meanings as well as sound-meaning relationships and to work with words one commonly does not use

A similar approach is to ask children hearing a story to listen for interesting words and phrases. Listening to Doris Chaconas's *The Way the Tiger Walked*, children may afterwards identify words and phrases like *powerfully, gracefully, beautifully, glided, arched his neck, rolled his muscles, as black as a raven's wing* as ones they enjoyed. As children call out enjoyable story words, the teacher prints them on individual word and phrase cards placing all the cards on a clearly visible area of classroom floor—the composing stage. Children build the words into a thought by adding additional words to some of those recorded from the story, they try out various arrangements of the cards, finally deciding on one layout that helps to communicate their thought. Of course, there will be some words that will be left over and not included in the patchwork piece.

Young people who enjoy designing word pictures graphically on paper can cut apart the words of their own free thoughts to form individual word cards. Now they can try out various arrangements of the cards on paper to find one design that communicates most clearly, then they paste down on colored construction paper. The activity works equally well with poetry or prose selections, for in prose the ways words are



placed on paper can be an important component of the message as we have seen in Edward Lear's story 'The Parrots'

### Acrostics.

Blow up and tie up  
A big balloon  
Let it fly free  
Let it dance  
Open up the string!  
Out comes the air and  
Now the balloon  
Spins in crazy, arching zooms

"Balloons" is an acrostic, or an ABC poem. It has a visual dimension in that the letters of the subject word are written in bold print and form the beginning letters of the lines. Even very young children who have just learned to differentiate among beginning sounds of words, can write or patch together simple acrostics. The very young write only one related word or phrase next to each letter of a word listed downward on their page, searching their picture dictionaries to find appropriate words to print next to the beginning letters.

**Summary—Visual and Verbal Communication** Generally if a class is engaged in art activity, there is enthusiasm in the air as students work actively on their projects. An advantage of involving young people in written expression having a visual component is that one can capitalize on students' appreciation of art activity, enthusiasm for art may be transferred to expressing with words. Also there is a security factor. Some youngsters feel more comfortable communicating visually. When a writing activity has a visual component, these students have a greater sense of security than they might have had if the writing were strictly a verbal endeavor. Especially with younger children and those having problems expressing themselves verbally on paper, a teacher should search out ways to correlate written expression with other forms of creative communication.

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Devise an original squiggle. With a class brainstorm ideas as to what it could represent. Engage the class in writing a thought based on one interpretation of the squiggle.
- Write your own figure poem to share with a group of students.
- Try writing the following words so that their meaning is communicated through the visual arrangement on paper: *reversed* *scrambled* *head over heels* *rain* *patchwork quilt*. Think of some other words that would be easy to design visually into pictures.
- Compose an original acrostic to introduce the form to primary grade children. Compose a second acrostic to introduce the form to upper elementary students.



A Word Thought

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| W | I | N | D |
| h | c | o | r |
| i | y | i | a |
| s |   | s | t |
| t |   | y | i |
| i |   |   |   |
| i |   |   |   |
| n |   |   |   |
| g |   |   |   |
| w |   |   |   |

## Making Practical Writing More Creative

In *Developing Language Skills in the Elementary School* Drs. Greene and Petty (1975) state, "Writing may have utility and at the same time show genuine creativity." Letters, reports, and reviews can contain fresh thoughts on a subject, thoughts expressed with the clarity and vividness that characterize stories and poems.

**Letter Writing.** One ten-year old wrote to his aunt:

Dear Aunt Ethel,

Thank you for the money you sent me for my birthday. I put it in the bank

Love,  
Chris

A second ten-year old wrote a different kind of thank-you that he sent to his uncle in the form of a "newspaper to read":

THE SCHELL TIMES

Sept 17, 1976

### A First!

On August 31, 1976, something happened for the first time ever in history! Douglas Alan Schell received a check. It was given to him by Uncle Bill. Doug was very grateful.

Try Uncle Bill's Birthday Gifts! "They're the best," says Doug Schell (advertisement)

Your Editor,  
Doug

How does a teacher help children go beyond the mundane level of Chris' letter and write with the flare of Doug? In the September 1973 *Elementary English*, Jane McDermott proposes that children be taught to write personal letters as if they are speaking and carrying on an imaginary, face-to-face conversation with the person to whom they are writing. They should be taught to appreciate the reader's interests and anticipate the reader's questions. She points out that the way a teacher phrases questions geared to draw out ideas from children may be the key to developing conversational style in writing. Why settle for tentativeness as exemplified in this letter, cooperatively composed by one group of first graders with each child making a copy to sign and send home?

Dear Mother,

We are giving a play next Thursday at two. Can you come?

Sally

Rather a teacher should encourage children to think in terms of the reader's interests, drawing them out in this instance with questions like "If you were talking to your mother about the play, what things would you tell her? What would your mother like to know about the play?" Prompted to think in these terms, children will proffer statements like: "The play is funny. You will laugh a lot," or "I am the clown. I wear a tall hat," or simply "We all get dressed up" — state-

ments that become second and third sentences in more creative and expanded versions of the letter

With older pupils a teacher can work on styling, helping them to select words and phrases that carry 'powerful punches', Doug did this with his phrase *a first!* Letter-writing time is a super time for brainstorming powerful punches to include in thank you invitations, and "get-wells" One class tried and devised these

| Powerful Punches<br>Thank You Punches                                                                                                | Invitation Punches                                                                                                                | Get Well Punches                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a whoopee gift<br>what I always wanted and<br>could never have<br>the best of the best<br>was I surprised!<br>it's already worn out! | a chance of a lifetime<br>an event you can't<br>do without<br>a run for the money day<br>a date to put at the top of<br>your list | miss you much day<br>keep kicking<br>don't give up the ship<br>the world will stop<br>without you<br>forget me not |

The social context of classroom and community provides innumerable opportunities for conversationally styled letters. Friendly notes can be written to classmates who are home sick, speakers who have visited school or classroom parents who have supplied refreshments to the class or who have accompanied the group on a trip. In upper grades, the class Social Committee, which changes its membership monthly, may tend to the class's social obligations. In lower grades letter writing can become a group writing experience, with all children suggesting possible lines to include in a cooperative letter and finally selecting those that communicate ideas of interest to the intended reader and those expressed with the greatest clarity.

It is in the context of writing real letters to real people that schools teach not only conversational style but the established conventions associated with correspondence. Some teachers have found that drawing up large scale models of both social and business letter forms is useful. Students analyze elements of the form and then model their letters and envelopes after it. One teacher printed a letter and envelope on the classroom floor with washable white shoe polish. By the time the polish had worn off the floor, students no longer needed the crutch it provided them in setting up letters and envelopes.

**Reporting** Children, especially those in upper grades, should be involved in writing reports as part of their study of social and natural sciences, current events, and controversial issues. As with letter writing, reporting offers endless opportunity for creative expression when boys and girls go beyond facts to project generalizations, opinions, original examples that "pick a punch."

One elementary way for young writers to inject some creativity into their report writing is to view an event through the eyes of someone or something intimately involved in it. Kevin experimented with this



Business letters to write  
Companies asking for  
information on top executives  
being studied  
Local newspapers  
commenting on issues  
in the news  
Companies commenting  
on policies that affect  
people and the  
environment  
Senators and  
representatives stating a  
point of view on an  
issue  
The governor of the state

approach to reporting in his creative description of the life cycle of the butterfly

### *Butterflies Really Live*

People are weird to us butterflies because they are tall and skinny and they never look different in their lifetime. Now we butterflies are very good looking. We have lacy wings. We can fly around. We lay lots of eggs. From our eggs come long, fuzzy caterpillars. When we are caterpillars, we eat a lot of leaves and stuff. Then we form chrysalises and take a long rest. After all that eating we need it! Soon we become butterflies again. Isn't that great compared to the boring life of people?

Kevin, grade 6

In much the same way youngsters studying about almost any natural phenomenon from earthquakes to glaciers, from sedimentary rocks to dinosaurs, can write reports in the first person speaking from the point of view of the object in question. Studying a period of history, they can write as if they were Henry Hudson, Louis Pasteur, Barbara Fritchie, or some other well known person from the past, using the point of view of that person to relate the facts. Similarly, youngsters studying geography can write as if they were a city or country and speak with the voice of that place. Youngsters studying art can assume the role of a person or object in a painting. Youngsters studying music can assume the role of a song character, writing about the feelings of that character.

A second way to inject creativity into report writing is through vivid prose style. David, a first grader, structured words rather creatively when he reported on a class walk in the snow; he wrote "I am disappearing in a snow world." Dena, a fifth grader, styled her sentences creatively to add impact to her report on Thailand's animals.

### *Thailand's Animals*

Thailand's animals interest me because many of them are cool.\* I like scorpions a lot and would like to meet one. There are lots of scorpions in Thailand. The ants there are fantastic. I would like to see the 'War of the Ants' — between Thailand's ants and America's ants. Maybe they could make a movie about it some day! I would also like to feed the lizards and Krait snakes and play with the monkeys. It is so hot there that the animals stay in the jungles, so I would have to go to them if I wanted to see them.

\*To me 'cool' means poisonous and scary.

Sam, a third grader, maintained a simple matter-of-fact, yet clear descriptive style in a report about his pet.

### *Jesy*

My pet's name is Jesy. He is black and white. He likes to play with me. When I throw a bone, he goes to catch it. He can roll and he can do flips. Every time I open the door he jumps up on me and he almost knocks me over. I like my pet very much. What is he?

**Reviews.** Writing reviews of books, films, and tv programs, although generally considered a practical writing task, is one requiring the greatest amount of creativity in phrasing, in choosing words, in developing uncommon relationships. Listening to noted tv film critics, a perceptive observer quickly sees how critics spice their reviews with handfuls of wit and play with words so creatively that one is left with a smile and often a chuckle.

Creative reviews are delightful to share orally with older students. tv guides supply one-line reviews that hit the nail on the head. Upper graders listen and go on to watch TV reviews, collecting witty lines and inventing similar one-liners that poke fun at particularly poor movies and television programs. As students continue to write longer and more involved reviews, they tuck in witty one-liners to add a pinch of humor to what they are writing.

### **Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills**

- Prepare a model of a friendly letter as a chart that children in second grade could analyze to discover the form a letter conventionally takes. Prepare a model envelope. Now repeat the activity, preparing more complex models for use by sixth graders.

### **Getting Creative Writing Going**

Start a pendulum swinging and the pendulum continues to swing back and forth on its own. Often the same is true of children and creative writing. In the beginning ideas for writing require a tap to set them going; but once in motion, the ideas continue to swing under their own momentum.

**Starting the Pendulum Swinging in the Early Primary Grades.** One first grade teacher was overheard remarking: "Getting kids loosened up to write in first grade is difficult." This teacher, as well as others who have worked with youngsters in the early years, is convinced that getting first graders "started thinking/writing creatively is quite different from getting older children started." She is also convinced that if children do not have positive experiences with creative thinking and writing in first grade, productive creative writing may become more difficult to achieve at succeeding grade levels.

**Talking About Things Experienced Directly.** Young children are egocentric creatures whose worlds revolve around themselves and their own actions. They are curious about that world—a world close at hand, not remote. First graders are beginning to develop longer attention spans, but still attention lags quickly and cannot be sustained for extended periods of time. Children's language is expanding almost exponen-

ally with new words entering the functional speaking vocabulary on a daily basis and with words previously encountered enlarging in meaning. Tasks such as writing down letters and words on a page are time consuming ones for young learners.

These characteristics of first graders determine to a large extent a teacher's approach to beginning creative composition. In the first place youngsters during this stage must be intimately and actively involved in topics about which they compose. Before writing they need to handle, do, observe, directly dramatize so that a topic becomes part of their personal and immediate experiences. As part of their direct contact with a topic they need to hear and try out words orally so that they have on the tip of their tongues the words necessary for creating about that topic. Talking about is essential before writing about it supplies the words for writing.

Having experienced and talked, young children need to move forthwith to the composing stage. At higher elementary levels young people can apply experiences and talk during learning station activity that will occur later in the day or week. In contrast first graders cannot wait! Once motivated by experience and talk they are immediately ready to compose. To wait is to lose the words and the feeling of direct involvement with the topic. To wait is to lose the momentum of the motivating experiences.

*Structuring the Writing* Young first graders generally function best when their writing assignments have a relatively high degree of structure. Without some structure the children may indeed have trouble getting started regardless of considerable time spent in experiencing and talking. Experienced first and second grade teachers have found that providing the start of first sentences helps little ones over the hurdle of beginning to compose. These teachers provide starts such as: I saw the biggest \_\_\_\_\_ I was scared by \_\_\_\_\_

I wish that \_\_\_\_\_ At the zoo I saw \_\_\_\_\_ —starts that relate to the immediate background of the youngsters. These teachers print story starts on the chalkboard in manuscript. Children copy the start on lined paper and go on to complete the sentence and compose several related ones. Sometimes first grade teachers supply children with a lined worksheet on which the story start has already been printed. Children write directly on the worksheet, continuing the idea already begun there. The advantage of this technique is that story starts can be lengthier since children will not have to struggle with copying them. Story starts can be simple thoughts like: On Halloween I like to \_\_\_\_\_ The pet I would like to have is \_\_\_\_\_ On our trip to the farm I saw \_\_\_\_\_

On other occasions first grade teachers mount a picture on the chalkboard, caption it with a topic word such as *My Pet*, and with children's assistance print around it other words to use in writing about the topic.

Part of the structured composing activity at this level is related art work. Children draw and color the story they are composing in addition to writing it. Art is a basic aspect of creative thinking and writing in the lower grades. Often children do not have the word power to

write down significant detail, rather they draw the detail into the concrete representations that accompany their written stories. Part of the composing activity is also oral interpretation with children following writing down with reading-out. Most young children delight in reading aloud stories they have just composed. Drawing-out and reading-out are integral components of creative writing in the early years.

**Supplying Help with Recording Problems** Without question first grade students are handicapped in composing by their limited spelling and handwriting skills. To help children write despite their handicap, some first grade teachers stand at the board while young children compose. The youngsters call out words they wish to include in their writing but cannot write down, and the teachers record on the board the troublesome words. At this stage, youngsters have a large speaking vocabulary including many words they have difficulty in recording for themselves. Having the teacher translate the known words into written form eases the problem of recording. The technique also pays a secondary dividend. A word that one student calls out may trigger thinking in others, who proceed to use it too.

A different approach is to encourage children to record ideas on tape. In Lewiston, Idaho for example, children record thoughts in the privacy of a simply constructed classroom booth. The students "mail" their tapes to a typist aide, who types the tapes and places copies into children's individual folders. Typed stories become children's "personalized readers" to be used in learning to read and in sharing writing with classmates. This approach gives pupils a positive feeling about the worth of their own ideas.

Where typing aides are unavailable, teachers or classroom assistants can take dictation directly from the child. During initial composing sessions the teacher actually takes over the recording chore from individual children who are struggling, giving them a boost at points when attention begins to lag. At other times, the teacher spends a defined period of time with individual children, recording impressions for youngsters who perhaps will later make copies in their own handwriting. Unquestionably small teacher-pupil ratios are essential in the early years. The teacher needs to be close at hand to assist children with the problems of recording that could make creative writing a struggle for the beginner.

**Keeping the Pendulum Swinging — Some Ideas to Try.** There are numbers of time-proven ways to set ideas for creative writing into motion. These include use of concrete objects, pictures, music, word patterns, titles, and a wealth of other real, representational, and symbolic materials as motivational devices.

**Thing Spots.** Slightly unusual things (a broken zipper, a dirty mitten, a shabby briefcase, a worn-out Brillo pad, a pair of long underwear, an empty frozen orange juice can, a browning banana peel) can be gathered into a writing corner where children write paragraphs of graphic description, stories in which the object plays a significant part, or "thoughts on \_\_\_\_\_". In lower grades when a

youngster brings an object for Show and Tell, it too is placed in the writing corner. In upper grades young people can be asked to contribute objects to the writing corner, better known as "The Thing Spot."

**Expression Boxes.** An expression box is constructed by pasting pictures on the six sides of a medium-sized box. Children select one of the six pictures on which to write a story or description. After students have experienced an expression box constructed by their teacher, they can make others with pictures they find particularly stimulating.

**Art Workshops.** Less representational pictures may trigger more imaginative writing. For example, children express ideas in abstract finger painting, which they go on to interpret through word stories. Or they

- place drops of ink on paper and spread it across the paper by blowing with a soda straw,
- make abstract designs by placing a large blob or two of colored paint along a crease down the center of a paper and by folding the paper on the crease,
- make paint splatterings by snapping a paint-filled brush above a paper,
- make string drawings by pulling a paint-laden string across a sheet

Art workshops like these quickly become writing workshops when children try to express as a story or poem what they see in paint or ink.

**Musical Interludes.** Music can set the mood for writing, it can also provide the substance. For example, one teacher uses a recording of Bach pieces played on Japanese instruments as background music while young people compose tankas. The Japanese sound somehow puts students in the mood to write.

In addition, some musical selections tell a story or describe an event, selections such as Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre*, Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite*, Dukas' *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite*, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel Overture*, Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*, Rossini-Respighi's *Pizzicato*, Donaldson's *Under the Big Top*. Listeners describe in words what they hear musically.

**Special Days.** Since birthdays and holidays are big events for children, special days are natural bridges into creative expression. Especially in primary grades a birthday child can become queen or king for the day, writing something about himself/herself to share with the class at the "royal birthday time" in the afternoon. Columbus Day, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Valentine Day, Christmas, Hannukah, Presidents' Day — all provide idea content for writing. Children write

- figure poems in which lines of poetry fill or outline sailing ships, pumpkins, goblins, hearts, fir trees, candles, stovepipe hats, cherries — depending on the holiday being anticipated,
- word pictures in which lines describe holiday sights, sounds, smells, feelings, tastes,



Use super 8 filmloops as express on loops: children viewing loops on nature-related topics such as butterflies, ducks, fish can write the script to accompany the moving pictures.



A good source of music to turn into stories is the Bowmar Orchestral Library Collection.



Find a complete listing of holiday titles for writing in Dorothy Hennings and Barbara Grant, *Context and Craft: Writing Expression in the Elementary School* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973).



- stories about leprechauns, witches reindeer, tales of explorations into the unknown
- conversations between two historical figures Mr Washington Meets Mr Lincoln, Mr Lincoln Meets Mr King,
- interviews with Columbus, Lincoln, Washington, King even Mr New Year

Less well known calendar days sometimes prove just as stimulating. Youngsters write an almanac for the month, describing for each day an associated event. Writers choose the form for expressing that best relates to the topic to be described.

*In the Headlines* From time to time experienced teachers supply pupils with a series of titles from which each selects one for writing. They clip headlines or first lines from exciting news stories that have received relatively little attention. Students unfamiliar with the original event create their own stories based on the headline. Teachers also fill a bulletin board with slips bearing suggested titles for action-packed stories. Student writers pick a slip from titles like these:

|                                 |                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Jaws in the Sea                 | The Broken Hockey Stick        |
| I Missed the Last Bus!          | One Inning to Go               |
| Lost!                           | On the Ten Yard Line           |
| On the Hundred and Fourth Floor | Three Seconds on the Clock     |
| Do You Recognize This Face?     | Strike Two, the Umpire Shouted |
| Run for Cover                   | The Blinking Light             |
| Trapped                         | Hurricane Alert                |
| Who Was Following Me?           | The Tale of a Dog              |
| I Was Accused                   | I Flew Supersonic              |

On other occasions young writers convert common warning signs into headline stories that tell who, what, when, where, why, in exciting fashion. Signs include:

|                   |                       |                         |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Danger — Thin Ice | Slippery When Wet     | Litterers Will Be Fined |
| Unsafe Bridge     | Beware of the Dog     | Drive Slowly — Sharp    |
| Wet Paint         | No Swimming           | Curve Ahead             |
| High Voltage      | Allowed               | Radioactive Material    |
| Hard hat Area     | Hospital Zone         | Goggles Must Be         |
| Live Steam        | Beware of Land Slides | Worn                    |

Final drafts of stories are mounted on yellow or red signs on which the warning has been encribed in black or white. Story signs are tacked along the sides of school halls, perhaps with a strip of black paper extending from each sign to the floor to simulate real warning signs.

*A Publishing House* On one classroom door the sign Pine Brook Press was posted. Inside sixth graders worked on their own or in author/illustrator teams writing original picture storybooks. Earlier their teacher, to interest students in book writing, had rolled into the room a cartful of storybooks newly arrived in the school. Together

they had read and looked at the variety of story and art patterns represented in the collection and finally had decided that they would become a press publishing their own books to share with younger children and to distribute to local libraries. Now they were engrossed in storywriting, they would go on to illustrate the stories, bind stories and pictures together, and design covers. Eventually they would go to the kindergarten and first grade to read their books to the little ones.

Young people take great pleasure and pride in book writing, especially when they can choose the kind of book to do. Cut-out books like Bruno Munari's *Circus in the Mist*, Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *The Secret Birthday Message* can inspire young writers to dream up stories that they illustrate graphically as these masters of storybook writing have done. Tiny books like Maurice Sendak's *Nutshell Library* invite children to "think small" and create their own hand sized books about little things like mice, mites, nuts, or even prunes. Repetitive poetry pieces in book form like Robert Welber's *Song of the Seasons* can inspire students to write verses to illustrate as books. ABC books, counting books, and day books — in which each page tells a happening on the next day of the week — are easy formats for beginning author-illustrators. The nonverbal story in which pictures carry the storyline and in which there are no or few words is helpful in developing understanding of story sequence and structure.

Book writing can provide a meaningful context for motivating young people to revise stories so that phrases flow smoothly, sentences are complete, and interesting words are spelled correctly. It makes preparation of a clearly written or printed final draft a purposeful activity. After all, the finished book with illustrations in place and book jacket lettered and covered with contact paper must resemble a book and cannot be filled with the crossouts and markovers that characterize a first draft. Book writing also is an opportunity to introduce upper graders to literary analysis. They study storybooks actually intended for younger children, not simply to enjoy the story but to find out how books are put together, in this respect they are sharpening analytical thinking skills that they will need in high school and college work. Of course, young children can create books, but in their case pages of a book must be dictated to a scribe, as was described in an earlier chapter.

A classroom 'Pine Brook Press' can produce filmstrips as well as books. Several companies market a write on clear filmstrip. Students can print or type lines of original poetry directly on the strip, draw abstract or realistic sketches to correlate with the poems, and even splice into their filmstrips pictures from out-of-date filmstrips, using transparent tape to make the splice. Students are intrigued by a relatively new filmstrip-making material: black scratch film. Black scratch is opaque so that when scratched with a pin, the light shines through to contrast with the rest of the darkened screen. Children can fill a film with abstract designs — combinations of circles, lines, and shapes — and write thoughts triggered by the dancing designs when projected. Thoughts are typed on clean filmstrip, which is spliced into the moti-

vating black scratch film, forming a total verbal/visual program Young producers can present their programs to the class

A literary magazine — *The Pine Brook Quarterly* — and a newspaper — *The Pine Brook Times* — are other publications that a classroom press can design, write, and distribute A mimeographed magazine features Poetry Pages, Laugh Lines (jokes, riddles), Story Spots, Opinion Notes (book, film and tv reviews), Puzzle Pages, and Advertisements A newspaper features editorials, news stories, letters to the editor, political cartoons, comics, sports, social events, classified advertisements, advice to the lovelorn, cooking hints, obituaries, births and wedding announcements Young people study real magazines and newspapers to determine styling and features, and in the process they learn how these publications are organized and written Class publications also supply young writers with a purpose for writing and revising, writing becomes a meaningful means to communicate ideas to others

**Starting the Pendulum Swinging — Some Generalizations.** To date, research provides few definitive conclusions about how to teach students to write creatively On the other hand, teachers who successfully have guided children's creative writing generally agree on some basic principles accounting for their success Principles most often noted are these

- 1 Value the unique Encourage children to try for the unusual relationship and to experiment with new forms
- 2 Stimulate ideas by providing interesting contexts in which creativity can manifest itself This means that children have the opportunity to work with a variety of literary forms (haikus, figure poems adventure stories, fantasies, one-liners) as well as with a variety of subjects
- 3 Allow for some individual choice of both subject and form This means that all children need not work on the same writing activity at the same time While one youngster is writing a tanka in reaction to a nature film viewed in science, another may be writing in a personal diary and still others may be working together writing and illustrating an original filmstrip
- 4 Introduce children in oral composition sessions to possible ways to communicate ideas For example, a teacher should go beyond reading a few cinquains to involve children directly in composing cinquains together In this way children get a feel for the new form and have some understanding of where to begin
- 5 Provide writers with the vehicle for creative expression — words Keep charts of brainstormed words that relate to writing topics clearly visible in the classroom and especially in the writing center Writers help themselves to words they need to express thoughts Through this approach vocabulary development becomes an integral part of writing programs
- 6 Separate the creating process from the editing process since the two are distinctive parts of a whole This means that children do not focus on good handwriting neatness, and dictionary checking at the point when they are creating ideas and word patterns and

# Communication in Action



are first consigning words to paper. Only after children have "a hold on their ideas" — which, after all, are the substance of writing — and are returning to polish their work for publication do they attend to the mechanics of writing.

- 7 Require that only samples of writing chosen for publication be polished thoroughly. Especially when children are writing continually, they will find it almost impossible to perfect every piece written. It is equally impossible for a teacher to read closely every piece written by every youngster.
- 8 Encourage polishing of written work by providing opportunity for classroom publication. As was previously noted, classroom magazines, newspapers, books offer meaningful purposes for both writing and revising.
- 9 Provide opportunity for oral sharing of writing. Most youngsters take pleasure in reading aloud what they have written. Sometimes too oral sharing can substitute for more laborious rewriting: the final draft is an oral one presented to classmates from an original draft on which the writer has penciled in changes he/she wants to include in the oral presentation.
- 10 Conversely, allow for confidentiality of ideas close to the heart. Some ideas written down are too personal to be shared. Let each young person keep some of his/her writing in a Private — Keep Out folder that only he/she sees. Establish a special drawer into which writers tuck pieces they want the teacher alone to read.
- 11 Substitute a notion of constant growth for that of critical evaluation. Rather than standing as external judge and assigning A, B, C, D, to children's products, help them edit their own work by providing guidelines that lead to continual writing process.
- 12 Integrate creative writing into the total arts program. Writing is a natural outgrowth of speaking-listening periods, literature-reading sessions, and thinking-together times. Children can move from a group composition experience to choral speaking, chorusing together pieces just written, children can share writing during talk-times and expand on ideas written down. Writing also correlates easily with other forms of creative expression such as art, drama, dance, and music, for ideas expressed through these forms of communication can be expressed through writing.
- 13 Use the content areas — especially the natural and social sciences — as a bridge into creative writing. These areas can provide meaningful ideas to be expressed through writing.

### **The Key to Creative Writing — A Summary Thought or Two**

Clouds clouds clouds so white,  
Sky so blue,  
Rainbow so bright,  
Stars so clear,  
Moon so light  
make our earth  
a special delight

Michele Bischoff, Grade 6

Michele enjoys writing and her writing has developed to the point where she can create word pictures that are clear and forceful. Her enjoyment and creativity are to some extent attributable to the fact that she is in a dynamic classroom environment. Michele's teacher is creative in her approach, initiating writing activities that stimulate children to take off in a multitude of directions and simultaneously providing the guidance so necessary if children are to feel secure in what they are attempting. Enthusiastic, filled with creative ideas, and open to new ways of doing things, Michele's teacher enjoys writing, and at times she shares her own poems and stories with the class. In short, she is the key to Michele's success as a writer.

The teacher is the key to successful creative writing experiences in classrooms. For this reason, in thinking about developing creativity in children's writing, teachers must begin by developing their own creativity, trying the unusual, searching out the uncommon, opening their minds to the new and the different.

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## Writing skillfully —saying what you mean

“Then you should say what you mean” the

March Hare went on

“I do” Alice hastily replied “at least — at least I mean what I say — that’s the same thing you know”

“Not the same thing a bit!” said the Hatter. “Why you might just as well say that I see what I eat is the same thing as I eat what I see!”

“You might just as well say” added the March Hare “that I live what I get is the same thing as I get what I like!”

“You might just as well say” added the Dormouse which seemed to be talking in its sleep “that I breathe when I sleep is the same thing as I sleep when I breathe!”

*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

Robert Lombard’s class of third graders sat cross-legged on the floor, waiting for their teacher to begin. Each child held a flo-pen in hand and a piece of white construction paper mounted in readiness on a lap board.

Mr. Lombard’s directions were short and clear. “I’m going to read a very, very simple story. As I read slowly, I want you to draw a picture map to show what is happening at each key point. Draw a small picture to go with each event and connect the pictures with a line to show the sequence of story action. Let’s listen and draw!” The teacher displayed the cover of the book and read, “*Rosie’s Walk* by Pat Hutchins.” Then he flipped to the first page, read the words, “Rosie the hen went for a walk,” and paused while the third graders did a fast sketch of Rosie on one side of their papers. Continuing slowly, and pausing to allow students time to sketch, he read the second page, “across the yard,” and then those pages that follow, each of which consists simply of a prepositional phrase telling where Rosie walked. When Lombard read the last page, “and got back in time for dinner,” most of the third graders connected their final sketch with their first one of Rosie to show that she arrived home safely.

Using their story maps as notes, several youngsters retold the story, each contributing one event in the sequence. Then Mr. Lombard displayed the book again, page by page. He did not read but simply displayed the pictures. “What important story element have we left out of our story maps?” he asked. The third graders quickly noted the fox trailing Rosie on her journey and introduced a fox into their own story maps.

“Let’s design a map to tell a story we will invent,” suggested Mr. Lombard, gesturing to a large piece of construction paper he had mounted on an easel nearby and distributing a smaller piece to each child in the work group. “Who will be the main character in our excursion story? This was the class that had become enamored of Tillie Witch from the Don Freeman storybooks. Quickly one child sketched Tillie on the easel paper.

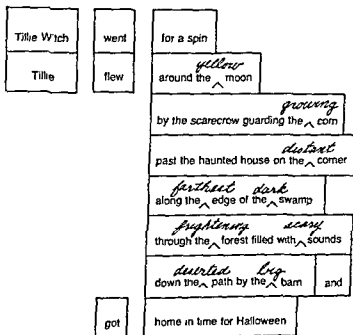
→  
listening for story detail

→  
recalling story sequence

→  
thinking through story  
sequence before writing

while the others drew Tillie on their own papers. After considerable discussion the youngsters decided that Tillie in their story would fly around the moon, by the scarecrow, past the haunted house, through the forest, down the lane, and would get home in time for Halloween. They decided that following Tillie on her journey would be Harold the Owl who would be hooting at Tillie the entire way. Each child made his/her version of the outline map; one child completed the easel copy.

Having designed their outline maps, the third graders selected story words. On strips of paper they printed the words to accompany each happening in their story, discussing first what specific words would make the story have a 'nice' sound and would provide needed detail. After many changes and dictionary checks the children wrote the following without the adjectives which they inserted later.



← converting an outline into a story

← writing a sentence with a series of prepositional phrases

The children laid out the story strips on the floor, positioning the predicate strips beneath other predicate parts — a task that was easy for them, since they had earlier begun to work with subjects and predicates. They added necessary punctuation to clarify the different parts of Tillie's excursion. Finally, the children inserted a few describing words to make the journey sound more 'bewitching'.

One third grader noted that the class story did not include Harold the Owl. Should Harold be added verbally to the story or left only on the story map? There was some discussion about how to handle Harold until a child suggested that the Owl take the place of punctuation when the story was read aloud: 'Hoot, Hoot, Hoot, Hoot, Hoot' at every period stop, 'Hoot, Hoot' at every comma stop. This suggestion appealed to

← revising what has been written

interpreting punctuation vocally

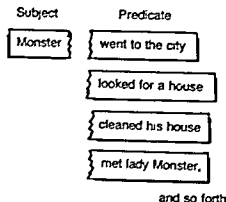


the others who immediately wanted to do the story aloud, half the class chorused the lines while the other half hooted the punctuation

Mr Lombard at that point held up an advertising poster he had received in the mail At the top of the poster were the words, "Monster went to the city, looked for a house, cleaned his house, looked for a friend, met lady Monster, used his magic umbrella, went to the museum, went on the bus, had a party, went to the zoo, and came to school " The children studied the words, comparing the sentence to the long one they themselves had just composed How was it similar? different? The children recognized that the new sentence contained a long string of different actions, that these actions were separated by commas, but that each part of the string was introduced by an action word like *looked*, *cleaned* Mr Lombard gave eleven children each a card strip on which to write a section of the sentence set off from the rest by commas When the strips were ready, the children laid them out on the floor to show the relationship between the subject and predicate parts in the sentence and the punctuation within the series

→  
comparing sentence  
patterns

→  
relating punctuation to  
sentence parts



→  
constructing stories that  
follow a model

Bob Lombard motioned to one child to gather up the excursion story cards, asking the youngster to mount the series later on the bulletin board in the writing corner He suggested to the group that during the coming days they could go to the writing corner to design original story maps and create excursion stories with string-like, or series, predicates Children could model their stories after the structure of "Tillie" with lots of "where" phrases strung in series or after the structure of "Monster" with verbs strung in series Together teacher and class outlined the steps in the task with one student functioning as scribe

The scribe placed the task sheet on a bulletin board in the writing center with the cards for both the Monster and Tillie stories During the week that followed students worked there by themselves or in pairs, developing story maps and related stories

### Designing a Writing Program to Develop Skills

Skill development rather than creative expression was uppermost in Robert Lombard's mind as he worked with his third graders creating story outline maps and writing related stories He was particularly con-

### Task Writing an Excursion Story

#### Steps

First select a main character and a silent watching character

Second, decide on places the main character will visit during the excursion

Next, sketch a story map showing the sequence of story events and the silent watching character

Then write the story told on the map Try to use interesting action words not just went

Add some describing words

After that, go back and add a story title

Finally check spelling of difficult words and put in commas and periods Make a fresh copy to attach to your story map Tape your paper to the wall in the hall



using sequence words to achieve clarity

cerned with children's ability to think through a sequence of story events the story map outline forced students to decide on the general direction of their story before selecting specific words to express the action and before writing the story Because sequencing of ideas was a prime concern, Mr Lombard had not prepared the learning station task sheet in advance, rather he had encouraged students to outline the steps they themselves would follow as they completed the task In so doing the students worked directly with sequence words *first, next, after that*

The teacher was also concerned about the children's ability to manipulate sentence patterns, in writing stories the third graders were relying mainly on simple sentences Mr Lombard had chosen *Rosie's Walk* purposefully as a model because the one sentence of which it is comprised contains a series of prepositional phrases Because the third graders had had little experience with this pattern the model was an effective device to stimulate children to produce sentences with a series element To help children understand the relationship among sentence elements, Mr Lombard used a visualizing technique — enscribing storylines on cards and displaying the cards so that the structure of the sentence pattern was clear — a technique that clarifies too the function of commas in setting apart each item from similar ones within the series As students went on to fashion stories in the style of the two models, they were practicing the construction and punctuation of sentences with verbs and prepositional phrases in series

In designing the session as he did, Mr Lombard was systematically focusing on specific writing skills, in this case the ability to think

sequentially and to write and punctuate sentences with predicate parallelism in series. Today he was not emphasizing creative expression, Mr. Lombard had encouraged and would continue to encourage creative development on many other occasions. Now his major goal was still development.



See National Assessment  
of Educational Progress  
Writing National Results  
1969-70 Writing National  
Results Writing  
Mechanics 1972 and  
Writing Mechanics  
1969-74 A Capsule  
Description of Changes in  
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(Washington, DC: U.S.  
Government Printing  
Office, 1970, 1972, 1975)



Based on Jane Porter  
Research Report -  
Elementary English 49  
(October 1972) 863-66

**Identifying Basic Writing Skills** At the end of the 1960s the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) began a continuing study of the writing skills of American young people whose ages ranged between nine and thirty-five. A panel of English teachers and scholars judged the essays of a population randomly selected from young people across the country. NAEP reported in 1969 that youngsters were severely deficient in basic writing skills, that even high school youths exhibited major weaknesses in sentence structure, paragraph organization, vocabulary, spelling, and usage, and that those above eighteen were reluctant to write at all. Six years later a comparative study revealed an erosion of writing skills from the low levels identified in 1969. In 1975 the NAEP reported increases in awkwardness, run-on sentences and incoherent paragraphs. Students tested in 1975 expressed themselves only the simplest sentence patterns and drew upon an extremely limited vocabulary.

The NAEP studies indicate to those concerned with language arts instruction in elementary schools that there is a pressing need for *ongoing* and *systematic* programs in written expression through which children are not only afforded opportunity to create ideas and express them on paper, but also through which children acquire requisite writing skills. Reacting in a press conference to early results of the NAEP study, John Maxwell, Associate Executive Secretary of the NCTE, proposed that writing should appear more generally in the curriculum and that mechanical aspects should be considered "a part of writing that cannot be separated from other parts, such as the development of ideas. Specifically Maxwell suggested the creation of writing skills laboratories for students showing a clear need to learn a specific skill, daily writing so that children want to write, frequent conferences with children so that mechanics are seen as a way to improve communication, group writing so that peers become an audience for children's efforts, group instruction when a problem applies to the whole group, and personalized instruction to meet individual problems. He also advocated more opportunities for classroom communication.

Reacting at the same time, J. N. Hook, Professor Emeritus from the University of Illinois, hypothesized a relationship between thought patterns and punctuation, suggesting that children do not use more complex constructions because their thought patterns do not require them, and the development of such patterns may be more closely related to thinking ability than to writing instruction. (Porter, 1972) Hook proposed that learning mechanics is not a matter of learning rules but of developing a comprehension of what each usage can do. In this respect the mechanics of writing are an aspect of clear expression of thought and aid to communication.

When viewed as a means of achieving clear expression of thought, imperative writing skills include

- ability to present ideas logically in written form specifically to—  
perceive relationships among facts and ideas,  
organize ideas into related categories,  
build well-organized paragraphs in which ideas are interrelated  
sequence ideas logically,  
use sequencing words (*first, then, after that*) to add clarity to written expression,  
sequence paragraphs so that one leads naturally into the next,  
use sequencing words (*first, then, after that*) to add clarity to written expression,  
provide essential detail to support main ideas,
- ability to write sentences, specifically to—  
write a variety of basic sentence patterns and expansions of basic patterns,  
transform sentence patterns to gain variety and clarity in expression,  
combine sentences and insert one sentence into another,  
write complete sentences rather than fragments or run-ons,  
use words other than *and* to connect thoughts,  
write effective dialogue,  
write sentences in which phrases, clauses, and words are placed so that meaning is clear,
- ability to punctuate and capitalize, specifically to—  
capitalize the first word of a sentence and a direct quotation,  
supply appropriate end punctuation,  
use commas to set off items in a series, parts of inserted sentences, appositives, parenthetical expressions names of persons addressed,  
punctuate direct conversations,  
insert semicolons to separate main clauses and
- ability to choose the appropriate word, specifically to—  
substitute a synonym for an overworked word,  
use clear, forceful adjectives and adverbs to add color to writing  
select interesting verbs  
draw upon and create similes, metaphors hyperboles, idioms,  
use euphemisms with care,  
avoid words of questionable usage, such as *ain't* eliminate wordiness







**Designing Activities to Develop Skills** Greene and Petty (1973) summarize the research studies that investigate relationships between learning grammar and skill in writing. They conclude that there is little positive correlation between formal study of grammar and ability to write effectively. To teach grammar as a discrete subject is not to teach the skills of written expression. The comments of Maxwell and Hook cited in the preceding section hint at the direction that writing instruction should take. Here are some guidelines.

1. Skills are acquired by participating actively and continually in the writing process. Children need be involved in all phases of writing.

including organizing ideas, composing sentences, sequencing paragraphs, checking usage, substituting more forceful words, rewriting to eliminate incoherency and wordiness. Skills of writing are not acquired simply by filling in the blanks of language arts and reading workbooks. Unfortunately much independent study in elementary classrooms is of the fill-in-the-blanks type requiring the insertion of a word or two rather than the composition of sentences and paragraphs. Instead of filling in the blanks, young people should be engaged in writing each and every day on a continuing basis in all subject areas, and in relation to ongoing class and individual activity. Students keep diaries and journals in which they record impressions of events in their lives: the classroom, the news, they keep observational logs of changes taking place around them: the growth of classroom seedlings, the cloud and weather patterns, the behavior of a pet, the amount and kinds of litter in the playground, the noise level of vehicles at a nearby intersection. Students record summaries of conclusions, organize facts uncovered through systematic search of references, write letters to organizations requesting information, and create the stories and poems to include in classroom publications and to accompany classroom art.

Some of this writing takes place as part of a class endeavor. Children contribute ideas and words to a class report, story, poem. At times all the children in a class engage in personalized writing—perhaps on a similar kind of writing task or on a task especially chosen to meet individual needs and/or purposes. But at other times, only a portion of the class may be writing in response to motivation set up in a writing, social science, science observation, or mathematics center, they may be involved individually at their seats in editing and reviewing pieces previously written, or they may be preparing final copy for bulletin board display. Under teacher guidance some children may be working on a particular writing problem. When writing is conceived as a continual, ongoing aspect of classroom activity, writing is everywhere, almost all the time.

- 2 *Skills are acquired by analyzing and reworking what has been written.* After recording ideas on paper, preferably in erasable pencil, students should take the natural next step, rereading what has been written with eyes alert to catch obvious slips: failure to capitalize, a simple spelling error, failure to insert a comma, the need to start a new paragraph. In rereading their own writing children can apply symbols for copy editing:

-  for an insertion
-  for a deletion of words
-  for capitalizing
-  for changing to lower case
-  for paragraphing
-  for reversing order of words and letters

See Dorothy Hennings  
and Barbara Grant  
*Content and Craft: Written  
Expression in the  
Elementary School*  
(Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:  
Prentice Hall, 1973) ch. 7  
on which this paragraph is  
based

Student editors check questionable spellings in the dictionary look for more powerful words in the thesaurus, rearrange sentences and paragraphs to achieve clarity. Because a relationship exists between intonation and punctuation, students should be encouraged to read their compositions quietly to themselves, in so doing they begin to equate a rather lengthy pause with a period, a shorter pause with a comma, an upward rise of the voice with a question mark. Reading aloud helps also in identifying awkwardness in expression missing word endings, and sometimes even misspellings. Another similar approach is to pair students as editing partners. These work together to check spelling punctuation capitalization and usage, reading aloud first a piece composed by one then a piece composed by the other member of the pair.

Some compositions should be given more thorough revision. Youngsters keep their productions in individual writing folders and select pieces for concerted study and revision with teacher assistance. Pieces chosen are those selected for 'publication' or more precisely for mounting on the bulletin board, including in a class volume, taking home, or sharing with others informally in the class. The personalized conference is the key to such thorough revision. In the conference teacher and student consider ways to strengthen a selection. Does each paragraph build upon one main idea? Do the paragraphs flow logically? Are sentences complete? Is there need for additional detail? Is appropriate sentence end punctuation employed? Is there need to check some words in the dictionary? What kinds of sentence patterns are being used or perhaps overused?

Having zeroed in on a few specific problems like these, the youngster does a thorough editing: he/she inserts needed punctuation or transitional words, adds adjectives to supply detail, erases or crosses out unnecessary punctuation and words, erases spelling errors and inserts the correct spelling, cuts apart paragraphs that are not sequenced clearly and restaples to form more logical sequences. The dictionary, the thesaurus, pencil, eraser, perhaps colored pens, stapler, tape—all are important tools during this stage of writing. Neatness is unimportant for clarity of expression is what is being sought. Later, after the piece has been polished and when the writer is preparing a finished draft in his/her 'publication' hand writing, is the time to stress neatness.

The teacher/student conference is a personalized way for the teacher to contribute to the composing process. In the conference the teacher encourages the child to identify spots to check or rework, the teacher can also supply the positive reinforcement that students desire and need. The teacher can note a word used in an exciting fashion, a sentence pattern used skillfully, a word misspelled often in the past but now conquered. This is much more effective than the red penciling of errors or even the positive comments that teachers sometimes place on student papers.

Donald Graves (1976, pp. 649-50) notes that the personalized conference between teacher and young writer is a time for developing self-critical powers. During a conference the teacher attempts to

Planning out with the teacher ideas that will be expressed in personalized writing



elicit information rather than dispense directives. According to Graves, a teacher might begin by asking "Would you look at these papers from your folder and choose the one you think is best and the next best and then the next best? Why is this the best paper?" Or helping the child with organization, the teacher might query "Do you think this sentence ought to come after this one? Read it out loud and tell me what you think." Or "You have two thoughts in this sentence. Read it out loud and tell me where the first one ends." Or helping the child see the need for more specifics, the teacher might ask "You say he had an accident in the race. What happened to the car? What did the front fender and head light look like after it hit the guard rail?" As Graves points out, if young writers begin to discover their own strengths and weaknesses, they themselves will shortly be telling the teacher what is needed to improve their writing.

- 3 *Writing skill is acquired through reading content written in different styles.* Ramos Veal of the University of Georgia explains the rationale behind this generalization most succinctly in remarks quoted in a popular news magazine "Writing is, after all, book-talk. You learn book-talk only by reading." Unfortunately reading is not currently in vogue among youngsters or oldsters. Televiewing intrudes into the time that people formerly filled with pleasurable reading, since telecasts generally rely on the most simple of sentence patterns, these are the patterns after which the televiewer models his/her own sentences in writing.

Some schools are taking steps to make reading an important part of the school day. In one school for twenty minutes a day quiet

See "Why Johnny Can't Write" *Newsweek* 86 (December 8, 1975) 59-65

reigns as everyone in the school—students, teachers, principals, secretaries, custodians—settles down with a book that the individual has chosen. In another school each classroom has a corner set aside for independent reading. The first grade corner is a table with carpet mats beneath it on which young children can stretch out to read, the third grade corner is an area partitioned off with waist high pegboard behind which there are a few child-sized rocking chairs for rocking-while reading, the fourth grade corner is an immense industrial-sized carton into which a window has been cut so there is light for the youngster who crawls in to read, and the sixth grade corner is an interest center with easy chairs, side tables, and lamps. The children make weekly excursions to the school library to select books for independent reading in the classroom corner and at home on evenings and weekends.

To prompt children to read, teachers are trying numbers of motivational ideas. One teacher strings a wire high up across her fifth grade classroom. At one end of the wire, students attach a worm-like head cut from green construction paper. As they complete books, children cut green construction paper strips, print the name of book title and author on a strip, and loop the strip around the wire, pasting the two ends together. Each green book loop becomes a segment of Barney the Bookworm's body. As more and more books are enjoyed, Barney the Bookworm grows longer and longer until he extends the complete length of the wire.

Another teacher prompts children to write brief annotations of books read. The annotations are printed on cards and placed on a 'Books for Sale' bulletin board. Between other activities a child takes a card he/she has written and sells the book to the class auction-style. 'I have one adventure story with a pirate, a pirate ship, and a lost treasure. There is lots of action and a wild ending. What am I bid for it?' Bidders bid books they have read, with the auctioneer deciding which bid to accept, in accepting a bid the auctioneer is accepting a book for later reading.

Still another teacher mounts a spin the arrow oaktag chart on the bulletin board. The pie shaped chart is divided into wedges, each of which bears a category of book: biography, adventure story, mystery, poetry, informational book, fairy tale. An arrow is clipped to the pie center. Before heading to the library, each child spins the arrow to identify the book he/she will select. Although a child may read several books, at least one should be in the category spun. A teacher can include two wild cards on a spin-the arrow chart, the child whose spin stops on a wild card has free choice that week.

The surest way to bring children and books together is for the teacher to read aloud, something lower primary children really savor. As a teacher reads, he/she shares the pictures so that children gain a visual image of story action, changes vocal and facial expressions to reflect mood and dialogue, and maintains eye contact with listeners. He/she encourages children to listen for words and sentences that are particularly striking by stopping and suggesting, 'As I reread that sentence, think what makes it so good.' Older



For more on free personal reading, check Robert Whitehead, *Children's Literature: Strategies of Teaching* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), ch. 2. One bulletin board idea suggested is a 'bookworm shelf'—a series of book spines with author and title held in place by worm-shaped bookends. Children add spines to the board as they read new titles.



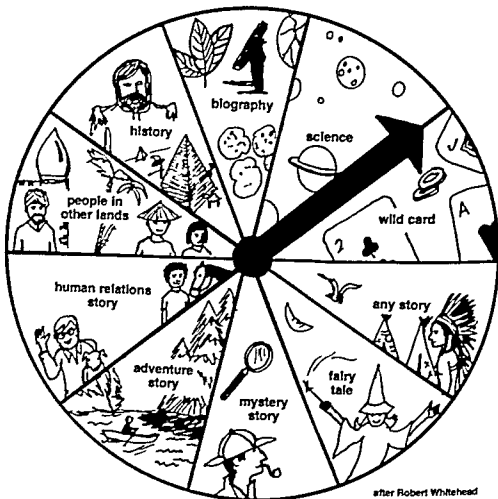
For techniques to involve children in reading as they work with the content areas, see Dewey Chambers, *Children's Literature in the Curriculum* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1971).



Find an excellent listing of books to read aloud in Betty Coady, *Using Literature with Young Children* (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown, 1973), ch. 1.



FIGURE 8 1 Fortune Wheel



books that listeners continue to enjoy include Dr Seuss' *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*, Ludwig Bemelman's *Madeline*, Virginia Lee Burton's *The Little House*, and Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. More recent stories such as George McDermott's *Arrow to the Sun* and *The Stonecutter* appeal to young listeners as well.

A teacher can read portions of stories to upper graders, especially chapters from episodic books, for example, a portion from Robert McCloskey's *Homer Price* or *Centerburg Tales* or one from Laura Ingalls Wilder's little house books, which are gaining popularity through the tv series. The book is then placed in the reading nook where children help themselves to further episodes from it. Or a teacher can place a tape or sound filmstrip of a book in the listening center. Here students listen to portions of Newbury and Caldecott classics as they view the story pictures on the filmstrip. The actual book hangs nearby so that listeners can reread the story.

Then too, young people enjoy listening to unique volumes such as the *Guinness Book of World Records*. They are intrigued to hear about the tallest, the longest, the biggest, the smallest. They

return again and again to this fascinating book to read some more, they can go on to publish their own book of class records, styling it after the original

- 4 Skills are acquired through writing that focuses directly on specific skills to be learned This writing complements more open experiences in which creative expression is the goal

It is possible to create pleasurable skill development activities to which children react enthusiastically Skill development activities have a high degree of structure, by writing within a predetermined structure, children practice actively a particular word, sentence or paragraph pattern, related punctuation, specific transitional words, sequencing of ideas, and so forth Of course, these activities permit less freedom for individual expression, but creativity is not their main purpose The purpose here is fundamental skill building Skill development and creativity, however, are not at opposite ends of a continuum Children have produced amazingly creative stories and poems when composing within the confines of a predetermined—but imaginative—structure

For example, one third grade teacher began a structured writing activity by capitalizing on children's reactions to an autumn wind so strong that it was rattling the window panes She read to them George Cooper's little poem

Come, little leaves said the wind one day  
Come o'er the meadows with me and play,  
Put on your dresses of red and gold,  
For summer is gone and the days grow cold

and gathered the youngsters at the windows While they watched and listened, she asked them to call out things the powerful wind was doing Children volunteered that the wind was making the trees bend over, tossing paper about, knocking over flowerpots, carrying away hats

The teacher asked the youngsters to think about what the wind would be saying if it could talk They eagerly suggested expressions such as 'I'm big and strong,' 'Get out of my way,' 'Watch out for me,' 'Come with me,' 'Listen to me' The youngsters voted on which expression they liked best The winner was 'Come with me!' The teacher then presented a structure in which they together would compose a wind story each page would repeat the call of the wind, telling whom the wind was calling and describing what the wind was doing The teacher and the students wrote a first introductory page

### *The Autumn Wind Takes a Trip*

When the autumn wind comes to our town, he calls to everyone to come along and have fun

Next they composed a page in the predetermined pattern

Come with me! he calls the leaves They jump from the branches and dance with him through the air



Find more poems like this  
in *Laurie Israel comp  
Weather Watching* (New  
York: Holt 1963)



Identifying data is to write



Handling personification  
and direct quotation



Supplying necessary  
supporting details

## After that they composed another patterned page

Come with me! he calls to the trees They bend over until they almost break

Each successive page followed the basic structure established initially until the final page, when the children decided to change the call of the wind, breaking the pattern to create a special effect They wrote

Come along! he calls to the kite The kite lifts its tail and climbs high over the treetops

I wish I were a kite! I call to the wind Then you would take me along with you



what has been written

As the children composed together, they took turns writing down the page in a copy book, leaving room on the adjacent page for a picture They placed the book in the writing center, and later others, who had not had a chance to write down a page, added an illustration to the booklet

In this third grade class all students were participating actively in the structured writing experience In many cases, however, skill development activities are designed for smaller groups The teacher gathers together youngsters who have demonstrated through their writing a readiness to work with more complicated sentence patterns or who have demonstrated a need for remedial work with some aspect of sentence/paragraph construction or usage Total class small group, and individual activity are all organizational frameworks to use for building writing skills

- 5 Writing skills are acquired through direct experiences with sentence building techniques in situations that are purposeful and meaningful One skill essential in writing is ability to combine ideas into a sentence Kellogg Hunt (1965) demonstrated that young children have difficulty building several related ideas into one sentence They rely on and to string thoughts together, as in 'I saw a dog and he was big and he was with a boy' Older writers are more likely to combine the thoughts 'I saw the big dog that was with the boy'

Jack Perron (1976 p. 652) suggests that 'the novice writer gains control over these (sentence combining) skills through a glacially slow process currently without much direct help from teachers He believes that direct experiences with sentence combining techniques can help children gain more rapid control over them Several studies affirm the validity of this belief John Mellon (1969) found a gain in seventh graders' writing skills through a program in which students systematically combined sentences based on symbolic clues for sentence building Frank O'Hare (1973) found a similar gain among seventh graders who combined sentences based on word clues The studies of Hunt and O'Donnell (1970) and Miller and Ney (1968) demonstrated similar gains at the fourth grade level

More recently Perron (1974) has been studying concrete and meaningful ways to involve elementary children in sentence combining activities One way he used was to ask children working

orally together to rework ideas into one sentence. Children describing an object as "It's hard it's round it's cold" might be urged to go back to combine ideas into "It's hard, round, and cold." A related activity was to ask children out on an investigative walk to describe things they saw. If a child remarked, "I see a man on the telephone pole," the teacher followed with "What's he doing?" When a student responded, "He's working on the power line," the teacher provided the word *who*. Now youngsters had to combine the two thoughts already stated using the word *who* to achieve one sentence. Another game-like activity Perron developed was Sentence Partners. Each participant held a card. Some contained noun clauses like *I know, this period will be fun, that this class will end*, some, adjective clauses like *who likes ice cream cones*, and some, adverb clauses like *after we eat*. During the twenty minute session, each child sought out partners that could pair with the clause he/she held and wrote down sentences that resulted. The child recording the largest number of sentences was the winner. In addition to these active games and experiences, Perron supplied the fourth graders in his study with original sentence combining lessons in which they had to combine several short sentences based on explicit clues he provided. Perron concluded that "The six-month study demonstrated that a grammar free program of sentence combining (s-c) lessons backed by games, activities and experiential exercises in s-c sentence manipulation, does encourage syntactic growth in the writing of fourth graders. It also demonstrated that games and activities do provide a valuable supplement to the language arts curriculum" (1976, p. 657).

### Thinking Out, Plotting Out, and Writing Out

To write in a way that communicates clearly is first to think clearly, specifically a writer must be able to relate ideas, organize those ideas to highlight relationships, and sequence them so that one flows smoothly into the next. He/she must be able to plan to some extent the manner in which to present ideas. To teach writing, therefore, is ultimately to teach thinking.

**Thinking Out and Writing Out** Work with relating and sequencing as well as with the words through which writers express key relationships is an important component of language arts programs at both primary and intermediate levels. In the following section is an explanation of how to engage children in thinking out activities that are a fundamental part of writing, especially as writers try to compose cohesive paragraphs in which all ideas focus on one topic.

**Relating and Sequencing Ideas - Primary Grades** Even young children can acquire some basic relating and sequencing skills. Thinking about similarities and differences is one way to start. For example, youngsters can manipulate the individual items in a miscellaneous collection of objects, organize the objects into related groups they themselves determine, and orally explain the rationale behind the groupings chosen. For this think

ing activity, objects are included that can be grouped according to color, size, shape, use, so that many groupings are possible. Youngsters go on to study a series of pictures and to organize them into groups based on a common feature. Magazine and newspaper pictures are a convenient and varied material, youngsters clip the ones they like, returning later to those clipped and organizing them according to topic, purpose, mood, colorfulness, or perhaps simply according to size. They mount the pictures on tag board and apply a categorizing label to each grouping they have identified. Youngsters in late first grade and in second grade can do much the same with word cards—ones like *dog, horse, brother, father, bike, skate*, sorting the cards into related stacks.

Elementary sequencing tasks are also possible in the primary years. To kindergartners, a teacher can read aloud a series of three related but scrambled sentences. Children listen and decide the order in which the sentences should be read to make the best sense. Later when children have developed some beginning reading skills, the teacher supplies paragraphs from stories cut from out of date and discarded primers and beginning basal readers. Each paragraph is cut into a separate strip so the pupils can handle each and line them all up in the order that tells the story best. Several of these story sequencing activities should be done as a group so that children know how to proceed when working independently on other scrambled paragraphs.

Children should be encouraged to reorder sentences within their own written work. After writing an experience story chart, they go back to reorder the thoughts, placing a number before each sentence to indicate sequence. If children are to copy the piece for handwriting practice as is commonly done, they should copy not the original but the revised sequence shown by the numbers.

Writing experience story charts is a fine time for introducing children to paragraphing on a simple scale. Students in one primary class dictated the following series of sentences to their teacher, giving sentences really not in any logical order, but rather in the order in which the thought came to mind.

I like to build a snowman. We like snow. Snowflakes fall on the ground.  
Frosty the snowman could be alive. Snowflakes are white.

Going back to look at the sentences they had written, the children decided first that not all their sentences were about the same topic, there were actually two topics. Then they ordered the sentences that related to the first topic. These sentences became the first paragraph in their revised story. In like manner they ordered the remaining sentences to form a second paragraph. The new result was printed up by a student volunteer and reread several times during the day.

#### *Snow*

We like snow. Snowflakes fall to the ground. They are white.  
We like to build a snowman. Frosty the Snowman could be alive.

To achieve this kind of result with young children requires conscious input by the teacher. Ms. Whitman, the teacher who helped her students

produce the snow paragraphs guided her class with questions Which other sentence tells about the same thing as this one does? Do these two sentences talk about the same thing? Which sentence should we put first? second? By responding to questions like these youngsters think through the relationships among ideas, noting which ideas belong together, which do not

**Relating and Sequencing Ideas — The Intermediate Grades** In upper grades young people can categorize facts discovered through reading Intermediate pupils can read to uncover facts about a topic of interest recording the most 'fascinating facts' on cards carried along to the library during fact finding time Later during a class fact storming children fill the chalkboard with their discoveries

Florence Amos students zeroed in on elephants for their fact finding and found fascinating facts like those shown here

#### Fascinating Elephant Facts

|                                                       |                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| have big ears                                         | are becoming less common                     |
| eat hay                                               | are the largest living land animals          |
| are very strong                                       | sleep during the heat of the day             |
| have rough skin                                       | often weigh 4 tons                           |
| pick up heavy things                                  | have padded feet                             |
| sleep standing up                                     | swim and use their trunks as snorkels        |
| live as a family herd                                 | have long trunks                             |
| have thick skin                                       | make a loud trumpeting sound                 |
| are sometimes called pachyderms because of their skin | are generally gray                           |
| push logs                                             | are found in Asia and Africa                 |
| are kept in zoos                                      | can be 11 to 12 feet tall                    |
| have ivory tusks                                      | squirt water on themselves with their trunks |

When the board was filled with facts the children in Mrs. Amos' class began to sort related items. They starred all the facts pertaining to elephant appearance, circled items pertaining to elephant habits, and underlined items dealing with the importance of elephants. Having categorized their Fascinating Elephant Facts, the fact finders divided into two person writing teams. Each team wrote a short paragraph containing only one category of fact, some groups concentrated on designing appearance paragraphs, others on designing habit paragraphs and still others on designing importance paragraphs. Three groups each of which had concentrated on a different aspect of the topic, later combined into one large group. Together they edited their three paragraphs, decided on a logical order for them and built the three into a short report on elephants. Most groups added a short summarizing paragraph and a forceful title. In this instance, the cooperative writing task required the children to consider the structuring and logic of ideas. It provided them with the opportunity to handle basic paragraph relationships.

←  
Finding related facts and  
composing paragraphs  
based on these facts

Composing a paragraph together



On another occasion Ms. Amos students fact-stormed two contrasting points of view. First they filled the board randomly with reasons why it was splendid to have a pet. Whatever thoughts came into their heads they added to the chalkboard collection. Then they considered the problems of having a pet. Again a collection of thoughts was written on the board without any attempt at relating or organizing. Finally the children grouped for paragraph writing. Each two-person writing team focused either on the advantages or disadvantages of owning a pet. Ms. Amos had used the terms *advantages* and *disadvantages* as students had fact-stormed together. Now she suggested that teams use one of these words in their paragraphs.

Teams later combined into four-person groups, edited the two paragraphs they had previously written in smaller teams, and built the two into a short report by deciding on the order of paragraphs and inserting contrasting transitional words. Ms. Amos had posted a list of sample words to help the writers unite their paragraphs: *on the other hand*, *however*, *regardless*, *but*, *nevertheless*, *in contrast*. Before beginning to write the children had talked about how these words are used and had concocted model sentences. Through this activity the teacher was building two kinds of thinking/writing skills — ability to focus a paragraph on one

→  
writing paragraphs that  
focus on one main idea  
and that have smooth  
transitions

sters to construct a formal outline. Formal outlining is not necessarily a productive way to organize ideas for writing and may actually stifle creative organization. Few writers can construct a precise outline replete with Roman numerals, numbers, and upper and lower case letters, adhering strictly to that outline when writing.

Outlining nevertheless, is a tool for developing thinking skills, in constructing one, people are forced to identify main topics and related subtopics, the same kind of thinking so important in paragraph writing. Additionally it is a tool for checking the logic of what has been written. Having put together a report, writers can note in the margin the main and supporting ideas of each paragraph to discover where they have erred in writing.

Children even in lower grades can have fun thinking and outlining actively together. One teacher prepares for an introductory outlining session by printing out a series of word and phrase cards. One set of cards contains the following: Chicken, Woodpecker, Canary, Bluejay, Turkey, Duck, Goose, Hummingbird, Cardinal, Owl, Hawk, Eagle, Ant, Bumblebee, Fly, Mosquito, Hornet, Ladybug, Cockroach, Waterbug, Beetle, Flea, Bedbug, Shark, Sardine, Trout, Tuna, Salmon, Catfish, Blue fish, Fluke, Bass, Guppy, Bear, Fox, Deer, Elephant, Zebra, Hippopotamus, Human, Camel, Kangaroo, Rabbit, Mouse, Rat, Pig, Lion, Squirrel, Dog. She scatters the cards randomly on the composing floor area of the room with students sitting on the floor around the area. Children each take a turn sorting the cards into related groups. One child selects a card and places it in a central spot on the floor. The next child either selects a card that belongs with the first or starts a second floor grouping by picking a word that is very different from the first. When the cards have been sorted, the teacher asks participants to identify the basis of the groupings. Generally the students sort the cards according to the following: Birds, Insects, Fish, Mammals. Volunteers make labeling cards, which the teacher sets on the floor at the head of each of four columns. Students place the appropriate naming cards under each label. This teacher indents the column of word cards so that they lie a good ten centimeters to the side of the labeling cards. When all the word cards are properly aligned, she chalks on the floor a Roman numeral *I* before the first labeling card in the series. Children follow through by chalking capital letters before the naming cards and successive Roman numerals before the other three. Students add the period marker after numerals and capital letters. To make the lining up of cards easier, some teachers use a crack between floor tiles as a guide for aligning word cards, the left side of each word card abuts the selected crack. Others have actually painted numerals, letters, and periods on the floor with washable white shoe polish, which will wear off with time. The result is an outline format that students can reuse on other occasions.

When children have organized word cards in an outline complete with labels made on the spot, the teacher takes away the labels, reshuffles the cards, and scatters them randomly on the floor. The new task is to group the cards differently. There are of course many ways to organize the animal cards — Pets/Nonpets, Flyers/Nonflyers, Large Animals/Small Animals, Walkers/Nonwalkers, Swimmers/Nonswimmers — ways that students can discover.

→  
Sorting items based on a  
shared feature



Teachers can work with older students toward subclassifications. Children who have categorized animals as walkers and nonwalkers, for instance, may subdivide the walkers into two-, four-, and six legged walkers. In doing so they must incorporate third level entries into their outlines.



identifying subcategories of ideas

#### 1 Walkers

##### A Two legged walkers

- 1 Goose
- 2 Kangaroo
- 3 Human
- 4 Etc

##### B Four legged walkers

- 1 Fox
- 2 Pig
- 3 Etc

When the students have worked as a group on the task, the teacher places the set of cards in an organizing-thinking station where youngsters can go to reorder the cards independently. In the station are placed other sets to be ordered. A quick trip through a thesaurus uncovers numbers of words related to topics such as clothing, plants, food, sounds, means of communication, means of transportation, occupations that can be grouped according to characteristics. A fast team of students can locate words for further playings of the outline game and can print out the word cards as a handwriting practice activity.

Having had some practice with relating categorizing and outlining, young people can begin to handle more complex materials. Instead of working with simple word cards, they can write out their own idea cards that relate to a predetermined main idea. This is the converse of the thinking required in activities just described. For example, a teacher can supply several main idea cards all on some phase of the same subject, a subject that youngsters have been studying so that they have the basic background information.

Ways We Can Save Energy

Sources of Energy

Reasons for Conserving Energy

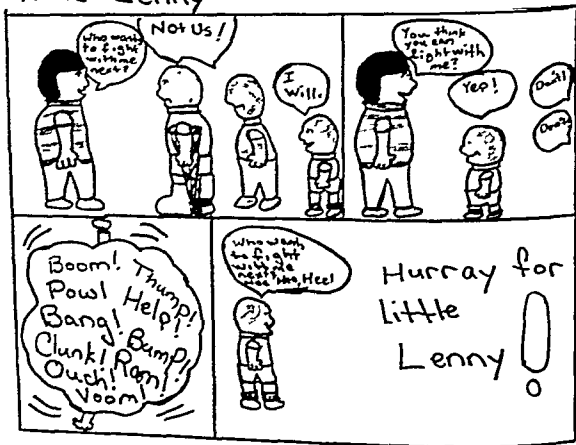
Children working in groups prepare subtopic cards, each bearing a thought that relates to one of the main idea cards. They sequence their cards, aligning them under the main idea cards on the composing floor. If children print in large letters, they can compare cards prepared by the groups, discussing the logic of the sequencing and relating. The teacher may suggest that groups attempt writing paragraphs, each focusing on the main idea provided and including the related thoughts written on the cards.

*Relating, Sequencing, and Outlining – Providing Practice* Children require continuing practice with relating and sequencing, they should be involved on numerous occasions with these thinking processes so fundamental to clear written expression. Given below are some ideas for stimulating thinking. The first five can be used with lower primary children, the last five with older boys and girls.

- 1 **Draw A-Story** Children divide the space at the top of primary picture story paper into four sections, and in each draw a picture that tells in order the story they write on the lines beneath.
- 2 **Short Comics** Children can create their own comics. The blocking out of incidents into comic frames forces youngsters to consider sequence. To facilitate comic writing children cut construction paper into strips, which they then fold to form frames.

FIGURE 8-2 Short Comics

### Little Lenny



- 3 **Sequence the Comics** A team of students cuts four or five frame comics into individual frames and places those from one comic in an envelope or sealable plastic bag. The envelopes are gathered in a learning station where children go to unscramble the comics. Since the reverse side of the comic newspaper must form a completed pic

ture the exercise is self correctional primary graders simply flip over their pieces to check sequencing

- 4 **Putting Story Events in Order** The teacher summarizes key story events on four or five cards. Now he/she reads aloud the full length version of the story to a listening group. As follow up children order the story cards so that the card sequence is the same as in the story heard.
- 5 **Make The Transition** Through a systematic sequence of questions experience story writing can be structured so that children dictate sentences in a logical order with appropriate transition words. Working with several primary aged girls Virginia Papa did this. Below is the composition the girls dictated with the questions Ms Papa asked.

#### The Teacher's Guiding Questions

What did you do on Saturday?  
 What did you do first?  
 What did you do when you got  
 to the front of the line?  
 What else happened?  
 Then what happened?  
 What else happened?  
 Did anything else happen?

#### Our Visit to Santa

On Saturday we went to see Santa. First we waited on the line to see Santa. When we got to the front of the line we sat on Santa's lap. We gave him our lists. Then Santa asked if we were good girls and we said 'Yes'. Santa's helpers took our pictures and gave us Santa rings. We said 'bye' to Santa and went home.

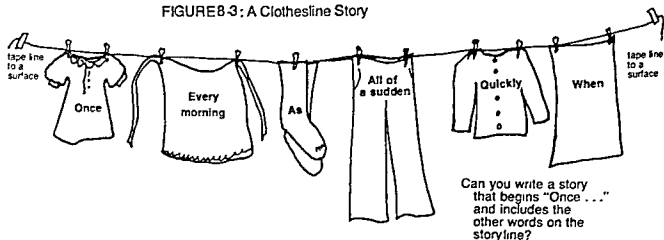
Notice Ms. Papa's use of the transitional words *first when then*. Notice too how the teacher's words became part of the dictated sentences of the story.

- 6 **Fact Finding and Fact Storming** Children can fact find and fact storm on a topic in the manner of Florence Amos. They locate facts about a country, state, city, continent, historical figure, sort the facts into categories and write paragraphs on each category of fact identified.
- 7 **Making a Contrast** Young people brainstorm reasons they listen to the radio, then they brainstorm reasons why they watch tv. Participants write a paragraph incorporating the first group of reasons and a second paragraph incorporating the other group. Similar pairs of contrasting paragraphs can be written on Cats as Pets/Dogs as Pets/Riding/Walking What We Do in School/What We Do Out of School.
- 8 **A Smooth Transition** Older students cut out large colored oaktag shapes and print on them words like *Last Sunday night As I was Soon Then After that Because Immediately*. With the cards clearly visible teacher and students together compose an oral story starting from the printed words one with which to start important transitional sentences. The words are clipped in order on the classroom story clothesline as the story grows. Later children independently or



Also use films such as National Geographic Educational Services (Dept. 77 P.O. Box 1640 Washington, D.C. 20013) *Portrait of a Whale* to provide content for factstorming and classifying.

FIGURE 8-3: A Clothesline Story



in groups can write other stories, selecting from among the transitional words displayed on the line. For other storywriting experiences the words clipped to the line can be changed with words such as *however*, *on the other hand*, *nevertheless*, or *moreover*, joining the line.

9. *In Order Please!* Young people can also reorder sentences from their own written work, numbering them to indicate the best sequence of ideas. They go on to reorder paragraphs in longer compositions, thinking about which paragraphs relate most closely. They can physically cut apart paragraphs, stapling the parts together in a more logical order.
10. *Going Back to Check.* Elementary students can make a brief formal outline of the content of a composition *after* they have written it. Writers study their outlines to see if their compositions are organized with related ideas together. This works smoothly as a large group activity. A composition is projected with an opaque projector; reviewers identify the main idea of each paragraph and decide how to tighten its organization. They follow with a similar review of one of their own pieces.

**Plotting Out Before Writing Out.** There are a number of creative, non-restricting ways to think through ideas before consigning them to paper. Each writer will find that certain ways work best for him/her; moreover, different kinds of writing will oftentimes require different kinds of preliminary plotting out. Language arts instruction should bring children into contact with a variety of planning techniques

**Character Sketches.** Several techniques may be productive to the story writer. One is to project a character sketch before actually putting the story together. Very young children can draw in detail the main character of their story, so that later when they write a description they can include those same details. Mrs. Stakiwicz's first grade did this with a character they invented—Quirtz, the Hodjaka. First they drew a sketch of Quirtz in full color. Then they wrote an introductory paragraph telling about Quirtz.

### *Quirtz, the Hodjaka*

Quirtz is a hodjaka. He has long blue fur. His head looks like a red ball. Quirtz has purple eyes. He has four long brown legs and a long green tail. His body looks like a hot dog. And he wears orange sneakers.

Quirtz likes to help people. He guards the mail houses and children. He helps old people across the street. Quirtz can do tricks like standing on his back legs. He can roll over and do a head stand.

They went on to write about things that happened to Quirtz.

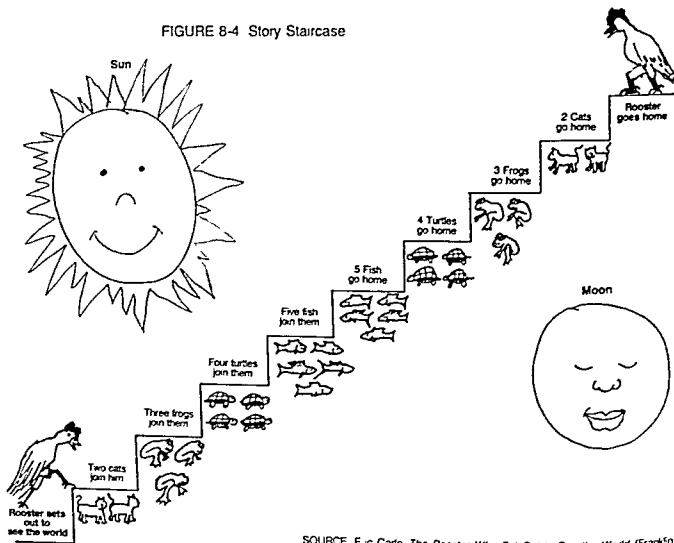
Character sketches can be more comprehensive. The writer draws several characters to be written into a story, adding character names directly to sketches and listing specific character traits such as thoughtful or mean, crafty or sweet, serious or funny, good or evil. Usually a student writer will include on a character sketch at least one good and one evil character in order to introduce drama into the story. Rather than literally sketching a picture of projected story characters, an older writer may prefer doing a verbal sketch. On a character sketch sheet the storymaker names characters and jots down words to describe them; he/she may extend the chart to include a notation about story locale. As a storymaker sketches out characters in this way, he/she may begin to comprehend that well-developed characters are an integral component of story, furthering the plot as they behave in a fashion that reflects personality traits.

**Plot Lines** In like manner, plotting out a storyline can help children think through the general direction of story action. Youngsters plot major story events chronologically on a straight or undulating line, incorporating sketches above and below the line as they think of detail they want to include at key story points. Color can be an aid in thinking through the emotional overtones of story events, with red crayon being used to write key words about very exciting portions, yellow, to indicate very happy parts, and so forth. As students write stories based on the projected storyline events, they will probably have to revise their lines, adding an offshoot loop here or more detail there as they weave story events into a whole. Written stories, without a doubt, will differ from those preplotted.

Sometimes storylines can assume more complex dimensions, even in the lower grades. If students are writing a cumulative tale in which each event builds directly on preceding ones, plotting a storyline staircase is a fun way of systematizing ideas. On each staircase step children plot what will happen next in their original stories. On the top landing, children plot the climax. As children concoct story staircases, it is worthwhile to talk about ways of reaching the landing so that endings relate to other story events. The story staircase of Eric Carle's *The Rooster Who Set Out to See the World* (see figure, following page) is a model for student inventions.

**Flow Diagrams** With her second graders Barbara Woods uses a simple story flow diagram as a story plotting device. Mrs. Wood's students

FIGURE 8-4 Story Staircase

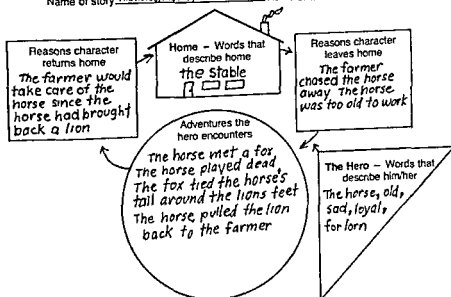


SOURCE: Eric Carle *The Rooster Who Set Out to See the World* (Franklin Watts 1972)

enjoy hearing stories such as *Little Red Riding Hood* in which the plot takes the main character away from home to encounter adventure and returns the character to home at the end—a cyclical tale. Students plot out their own cyclical tales on the chart resembling the one on the adjoining page. They consider why the character will leave home, what kind of adventures the character will experience, and why the character will return. Incidentally, youngsters can use the cyclical story flow chart as a listening or reading guide as they hear or read Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* or Marjorie Flack's *The Story about Ping*; they react by plotting story detail on a flow chart. Teachers can introduce the guide first for listening and then use it with children to concoct original stories. By doing this, students begin to see the relationship between what they are reading, hearing, and writing.

FIGURE 8.5 Cyclical Story Flow Chart

Name of story The Horse, The Fox, and The Lion Name of author Paul Galdone



Upper graders can develop more complicated plots based on more sophisticated plotting guides. Many stories involve the main character in a series of problems/obstacles/conflicts. The hero attempts a series of solutions, each producing unsuccessful results until he/she finally discovers a workable solution that brings a happy conclusion. Sometimes in such problem tales there is a string of conflicts to overcome and sometimes a different character takes a turn trying to conquer the problem. *The Three Bears* follows this format. Goldilocks samples each bowl, chair, and bed in turn, finding them all unsatisfactory until she samples the littlest. The more recent *A Story A Story* by Gail Haley adheres to a similar plot format as do many folk tales in which three individuals (brothers, Billy Goats, Little Pigs) in turn attempt to overcome evil personified. Attending to the story read aloud, listeners plot story elements on a guide. Then they use a copy of the guide to plot an original class story in that format. The class identifies a problem or series of problems to be solved, successive solutions, and the final solution leading to a happy conclusion. Students will enjoy plotting together, especially if they stretch a large piece of brown wrapping paper on the floor and sketch a story plan on the paper with colored felt pens. As participants decide on problems and solutions, a scribe prints those elements onto the burgeoning chart. Later groups can write down the story they have plotted out.

**Reporting Guides** Children who have worked with story flow diagrams will find it challenging to devise them before writing informal

tional reports. An easy beginning is to think through the steps in a procedure which children have actually experienced and which they will eventually explain in written form. Using a flow diagram for plotting out procedural reports, pupils start by identifying key steps and moving on to specific details. After an initial group activity in which they plot the flow diagram on charting paper, with colored inks distinguishing items in the sequence, they divide into two-person writing teams to write out the sequence using the preplotted details as a guide for ordering ideas.

Starting about third grade, students should be engaged in topical reporting based on ideas located in reading. Initially they will need help in deciding which facts to include in their reports and the order in which to structure ideas. As children begin to work on a project, help them think through details to include. Third graders in Lois Nichols' class each investigated the contribution of an important scientist. Before beginning their fact finding, the class identified key points in their investigation—points they included on their Fact Finding and Writing Guide.

| Fact Finding and Writing Guide |                                                                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name of Fact Finder and Writer | Beth Schmitzer                                                     |
| Name of Scientist              | Louis Pasteur                                                      |
| Date of Birth                  | December 27, 1822 <sup>Doleburg in eastern</sup> <sub>France</sub> |
| Primary Occupation             | French Chemist and Microbiologist                                  |
| An Important contribution      | He heated some milk to kill many of the harmful microorganisms.    |

Later the third graders drew information from their guides as they wrote a concise paragraph.

Marilyn Wald's fourth grade also developed a fact finding and writing guide as they began an investigation of animals to include in their original Animal Encyclopedia. Before venturing forward to collect information about animals selected for inclusion in their encyclopedia, the children identified key questions: how the animal looks, what sounds it makes, where it is found, and so forth. They listed the points they would investigate and projected a tentative order for writing.



### Fact Finding and Writing Guide

Name of Fact Finder \_\_\_\_\_

Common Animal Name \_\_\_\_\_

Scientific Name If You Can Find It \_\_\_\_\_

#### Questions To Consider

- 1 What does the animal look like?
- 2 What sound does the animal make?
- 3 How does the animal eat?
- 4 How does the animal grow?
- 5 Where is the animal found?
- 6 What are the animal's habits? How does it move? Sleep?  
Get along in its environment?
- 7 How does the animal protect itself and its young from enemies?

As students read about the animal topics they had chosen they noted facts directly on their individual guides. Later each topic or group of related topics on the guide became a paragraph in their final written reports. As they progressed in their fact finding and writing children bracketed topics they would include in one paragraph as they actually constructed their reports they injected arrows onto the guide to indicate the order of topics they found best. In addition to writing students drew colored pictures of their animals. Reports and pictures were bound to form the Wald Animal Encyclopedia which was sent to the other fourth grades for reading and enjoying.

Ms. Wald's fact finding and writing guide technique introduces young reporters to listing down of topics as a simple way for plotting out before writing out. With this technique reporters must combine and shift items even as they compose so that they begin to understand that a preplotted structure is only a tentative ordering and organizing guide one that writers must juggle in writing out a piece. As children write they will change their original conception of the design of their reports they will have to interject lines and arrows on their planning guides shifting and combining ideas so that paragraphs flow smoothly and logically. As anyone knows who has written extensively the preliminary plan is rarely perfect and must sometimes be revised extensively as the writer builds sentences and paragraphs together. It is after all only a guide whether it be in the form of character sketches storylines story staircases story flow charts process flow diagrams or simple topical listings.

*More Activities for Plotting Out* A few additional activities that ask young writers to plot out before writing out are given below.

- 1 Students clip from magazines five or six pictures of things that do not necessarily relate to one another but could be related through story. Working independently at a learning station, they help themselves to the pictures and think about a story involving those picture people, places, and things. Writers can eliminate one picture that does not fit into the story they are plotting out, they line up the pictures in the order of their projected story and compose their story based on that projection. Several series of pictures are tucked into separate learning station pouches so that a child who is not stimulated by one can try another.
- 2 Children can note specific details about a classroom happening, a news event, or something that happened to them by concentrating on who, what, when, where, why. Having filled in the details on a reporting guide, they write out a news story in which the first part tells who, what, when, and why, with follow-up paragraphs supplying greater detail. This is the format for newspaper reporting, and it requires young writers to distinguish most important from less important facts.
- 3 Children describe each step in a process or each event in a sequence. They plot out before writing out by jotting key words on a guide similar to the one supplied below. The italicized words on the guide can be transferred as key sequencing words directly to a written paragraph. To motivate their writing and plotting out, children should engage in an interesting process, such as making puppets or even paper.

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| Name of reporter _____              |
| <b>Describing What Happened</b>     |
| 1 What happened <i>first</i> ?      |
| 2 What happened <i>next</i> ?       |
| 3 What happened <i>then</i> ?       |
| 4 What happened <i>after that</i> ? |
| 5 What happened <i>last</i> ?       |

**Structured Composing.** As was hinted at earlier in the chapter, at times students can build their writing skills by composing within the limits of a predetermined structure. By working within a given structure, they begin to comprehend the components and organization of a

story, they learn the techniques for developing story action, repetitive word patterns that carry a story or poem along and even ways of styling a piece. Museum-goers have seen young artists at work in museums faithfully reproducing the work of great masters of the past. The young are in the process of acquiring the skills of art. Surely, young writers can benefit in similar fashion from structured composing.

1 *Drawing upon predetermined story elements* Most stories are constructed from a combination of characters, actions, locales, time, and mood. Some or all of these story elements can be supplied to students who have trouble inventing their own. One technique is to compile cards bearing character possibilities (a hermit, a CIA agent, a globe trotter, a crane operator, a male chauvinist, a tennis pro, a rock star, a race car driver), location possibilities (at the top of the World Trade Center, on an expressway outside Denver, at Disney World, under the St. Louis Arch, at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, on the edge of the desert, deep in a redwood forest), time possibilities (at dawn, in the rain, one cold winter morning, as the stars came out, in 2000 A.D.), mood setters (scary, powerful, frantic, tired, worn-out, excited). Each kind of card is grouped in a different learning station pouch. The student randomly selects a card from each, constructs a story from the motley assortment chosen, and in so doing learns something about key components of short stories.

A tighter structure is a Story Recipe in which the teacher supplies the specific combination of elements. Here is a recipe for spider soup and one for octopus stew.

#### *Recipe 1 Spider Soup*

- 1 Start with one giant spider with long legs
- 2 Add two fast flying flies
- 3 Add a dash of suspense and a few grams of excitement
- 4 Stir in these words: *urgent exclaimed caught hideous*
- 5 Set in a deserted garage at the crack of dawn

#### *Recipe 2 Octopus Stew*

- 1 Throw in an octopus with only five tentacles
- 2 Add one whale
- 3 Mix in a pinch of humor
- 4 Boil in a tablespoonful of these words: *smashed exhausted immense dull*
- 5 Lay in the depths of the sea
- 6 Serve with seaweed

Using the story ingredients outlined in the recipe, students concoct original stories. A teacher can compose ingredients for additional Story Recipes, and soon imaginative students will be preparing others for the Writing Center Recipe File. Words to write into recipes are *start, add, stir, boil, bake, set, heat, strain, serve with, chill, cool, pinch, dash, a few grams of, a cup of, a liter of, a kilo of, a spoonful of*. Topics to draw upon are sharks, rabbits, seagulls, chip

munks, watermelons, squash, ladybugs, ants, mulberry bushes, sassafras trees, grapefruit. Recipes are for soups, stews, chowders, casseroles, goulashes, mushes, crockpot dishes, pies, cakes, and breads.

- 2 *Beginning with a given paragraph or sentence* Student writers can start with a beginning paragraph and create original middles and endings to stories, in the process learning the relationship between story beginnings and endings. The teacher's beginning paragraph becomes a Story Starter that gets students over the initial problem of not knowing what to write. The paragraphs provided need not be long, a few lines will do nicely.

Title \_\_\_\_\_

It was getting dark as I set out for home, and the deserted road filled with shadows stretched ahead of me. Because there was no one else on the road, I felt a bit frightened, and I walked quickly along. As I neared the patch of darkness under the big oak that leaned its arms across the road, suddenly

Once children have written stories based on Story Starters, some writers may decide to concoct additional ones filled with exciting words, children's original Story Starters are added to a card file in the writing center along with a teacher's inventions, purchased Story Starter cards, and silent filmstrips that present beginning story events that children develop into stories.

- 3 *Verbalizing a Nonverbal Story* Numbers of books rely totally on pictures to tell a story. Children can write the script to accompany these pictures. Favorites for this activity are John Hamberger's *A Sleepless Day* and *The Lazy Dog*, Martha Alexander's *Out, Out, Out*, John Goodall's *Naughty Nancy*, Fernando Krahn's *Who's Seen the Scissors?* and *How Santa Claus Had a Long and Difficult Journey Delivering His Presents*, Jack Kent's *The Egg Book*. Books such as *Out, Out, Out* have been recorded on silent filmstrips, which children can view and then translate into words. The nonverbal storyline provides the sequence of action — the structure — for student writing. Or teams can cut away the balloons containing the dialog of comic strips. Other students superimpose the strips minus the balloons onto a piece of paper, there they write original dialog to fill their own balloons.

- 4 *Repeating Predetermined Lines* Many stories, especially those intended for young children, gain their appeal from repetition of key lines. Most readers are familiar with lines that repeat throughout Dr. Seuss's *Horton Hatches the Egg*. An elephant's faithful one hundred percent! They remember the repetition from *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*: "Who is that trip trapping over my bridge?" and the repeating cry of the fox in *The Three Little Pigs*, "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down." It is fun to hear such lines in stories — lines that carry the story action forward. It is equally fun to concoct such patterns oneself.

One way to engage children in storywriting with repetitive phrases is to introduce this styling device by sharing a story with children and asking them to listen to identify the key to story

success Repetitive stories to use besides those already mentioned include Bernard Weber's *You Look Ridiculous Said the Rhinoceros to the Hippopotamus* Patricia Thomas's *Stand Back Said the Elephant I'm Going to Sneeze* Mirra Ginsburg's *How the Sun Was Brought Back to the Sky* Ellen Raskin's *Mother Goose and Little Nobody* Harve Zemach's *The Judge*

Once children have identified as a group the key to story success — the repeated phrases or sentences — they orally concoct a repetitive tale of their own. The teacher guides group invention by questions that ask children to

- decide on a main character and name him/her
- cooperatively determine a problem the character must solve e.g. finding a friend locating a lost item becoming more attractive being accepted
- agree how the character goes about solving the problem
- formulate a line that is repeated throughout the story at key points

After group story inventing several group members write out the story

One group of students devised Douglas the Dragon who breathed such fiery breath that he was not nice to be near. The story they finally agreed upon went something like the one below. It can be used to introduce the repetitive tale to a class.

#### *Douglas the Downcast Dragon*

Once there was a dragon who was called Douglas. Douglas had breath that was so fiery he was not nice to be near. This made Douglas downcast.

Douglas decided to do something about his problem. He set out to find Mr Giraffe. Mr Giraffe Doug asked: how can I make my breath nice to be near?

The giraffe thought for a moment and then he answered: Just stretch your neck up like mine. Up here there are not many people who will be near you.

Douglas knew his neck wouldn't stretch so he set out to find Ms Turtle. Ms Turtle Doug asked: how can I make my breath nice to be near?

Ms Turtle thought for a moment and then she answered: Just use Scope in the morning and your breath will be fresh all day.

Douglas knew his breath was so hot that it would boil Scope so he set out to find King Lion. King Lion Doug asked: how can I make my breath nice to be near?

King Lion thought for a moment and then he answered: Just brush twice a day with Ultrabright so your teeth will be bright and clean smelling all day.

Douglas knew his breath was so hot that it would burn the bristles off a toothbrush so he set out to find Dorothy the most popular dragon around.

Dorothy Doug asked: how can I make my breath nice to be near?

Dorothy answered immediately: Haven't you noticed? All dragons have fiery breath. Just stay near the other dragons and you will soon forget that your breath is too hot to be near.

This kind of story invention is most fun to do orally as a group. Participants toss out ideas and play with words and sounds until

they settle on specific lines to be repeated. These lines provide a structure around which story events are built and through which humor is injected into the story.

Children enjoy writing similar stories that have an element of personification as well as repetition. Inanimate objects, things like a car, a snowplow, the sun, the moon, snow, rain, the wind are endowed with ability to talk and repeat a line throughout the piece — a line which again provides a structure for story invention and helps the young writer sequence his/her thoughts in a logical way. Questions to ask to trigger story invention are

- What are things that this object actually does?
- If the object (for example, a snowplow) could talk, what would it say as it goes about its task?
- What is the final thing the object will do in our story? What will it say at that point?

Young writers brainstorming about a snowplow may decide that the plow rides up and down streets, pushes snow off the roads so cars and trucks can pass, mounds snow up into big heaps for girls and boys to play on, blinks its red eye. As it goes about these tasks, it warns "Get out of my way. I'm coming!" This line is repeated on every page of the story.

Sometimes a pair of words or phrases repeated throughout the story can provide a structure for writing and help the young writer to organize his/her thoughts. A little book titled *Fortunately* by Remy Charlip is perfect for introducing children to contrasts in writing. Every page contains a pair of sentences, the first beginning *Fortunately*, the second, *Unfortunately*. The first sentence describes something positive that is happening, with the backup sentence describing the negative aspects of that happening. Children can model their writing after this book and can go on to invent within similar structures. In so doing they become familiar with organizational patterns available to them when they write. Here are some other patterns for writing. Alternate a line beginning —

- *Promptly* with one beginning *Nevertheless*, as in the sentences  
*Promptly* at ten everyone marched into the auditorium. *Nevertheless*, the movie didn't start until eleven and everyone had to sit and wait.
- *We know that* with one beginning *On the other hand* as in the sentences  
*We know that* birds fly south before the winter. *On the other hand* we see many birds in the north during the winter.
- *Will?* with a line beginning *Or will?* as in  
*Will* all the world be at peace next year? *Or will* there be wars and more wars?
- *I like* with a line beginning *I don't like* as in  
*I like* summer with its hot days, warm nights, and fun times. *I don't like* winter with its cold, cold, cold.

Rather than working with contrasting lines, students can start every line with the same phrase, such as *I dreamed I was, I ran so fast*

*I, I ate so much I, I met a* Sometimes the writing structure can be even tighter. Children composing within the strictures of *I met a* must follow with a describing sentence beginning *It was*. Or children inventing lines to follow *I dreamed I was* can be asked to include many color words in their sentences. Using this latter technique modeled after a suggestion by Kenneth Koch (1970), Ms. Kline asked each of her third graders to contribute to a class dream book a patterned line with many descriptive words. Some of the lines children invented were

- I dreamed I was a little bluebird on a rainbow over magic fun hills (Janine)
- I dreamed I was a purple and pink kangaroo sitting on the moon waiting for my tail to turn green (Lisa)
- I dreamed I was a white snowman melting in the red hot snow (Jennifer)
- I dreamed I was a green Donald Duck living in a key hole (Jill)

5 *Modeling writing after other stories and poems* Kenneth Koch also proposes that children write poems modeled after some of the great poems that have been written. The student who wrote the title line of Koch's book *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* (1973) was modeling a verse after William Blake's "Tyger, Tyger." In "The Tyger" Blake addressed the tiger directly. The child poet working with Mr. Koch addressed the rose in similar fashion. The "poetry idea" he gave his young writers was "Write a poem in which you are talking to a beautiful and mysterious creature and you can ask it anything you want — anything. You have the power to do this because you can speak its secret language." (p. 36) To introduce students to this idea for writing, teachers can play the fanciful song from *Dr. Doolittle* "You Can Talk to the Animals" and follow with a reading of William Wordsworth's "To the Cuckoo."

Teachers can choose Robert Burns' "To a Mouse," Blake's "Little Lamb," or with older students Lord Byron's "Ocean," and ask listeners to identify in what ways the poet has followed the directive of the *Dr. Doolittle* song. Then pupils brainstorm together: "If we could talk to the animals or any object, what one should we choose? What would we say?" One of these poems can lead into a class poem-making in which everyone contributes to a cooperative piece.

On other occasions, children, especially in upper grades, can be introduced to more ideas for writing. Upper graders enjoy "glory poems" — poems in which the writer glorifies the characteristics of something or someone. Models for this type of poem include Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper," "The Daffodils," "Upon Westminster Bridge," Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing," Robert Frost's "Birches." Questions to use to motivate writing of this kind are: What is something we all really "turn on to"? What do we particularly like about it? Participants in oral poem-making list characteristics of the chosen object and then build some of their ideas into a class piece. Later they write individually, glorifying something that particularly delights them.

Other forms to use with advanced students include

- the talking-to-yourself poem, see Vachel Lindsay's "Sea Fever",



See Carle Stegals  
Nashery in *Language*  
*Arts* vol. 54 no. 7  
(October 1977) 767-774  
It provides samples from  
Ogden Nash after which  
youngsters can model  
their own verses

- the everything is-wrong poem (the opposite of a glory poem), see W S Gilbert's "To the Terrestrial Globe by a Miserable Wretch" or W H Davies' "Leisure",
- the confession poem, see A E Housman's "When I Was One and Twenty"

A comprehensive anthology such as Untermeyer's *A Treasury of Great Poems* (Simon and Schuster, 1942) will provide a wealth of models for these forms of expression

Favorite stories can likewise become models for students who pattern their stories loosely after the favorite one. In this kind of writing the model supplies the story structure. Ronald Cramer in an article in the October 1975 *Language Arts* proposes that the model can at times supply even the structure for sentences written. He relates how second and third graders created stories modeled after Bill Martin's *David Was Mad*. Martin's story begins

David was mad

MAD! MAD! ANGRY!

He was so angry that he kicked the  
wall as hard as he could  
He felt hot — all RED inside

The children's cooperative version begins

David was sad

SAD! SAD! UNHAPPY!

He was so sad he stayed in his room  
for an hour  
He felt bad — all BLUE inside

Books Cramer recommends for modeling include Ruth Krauss' *A Hole Is To Dig*, Polly Cameron's "I Can't," *Said the Ant*, Remy Charlip's *What Good Luck! What Bad Luck!*, Barbara Emberley's *Drummer Hoff*, Katharina Barry's *A Bug Is To Hug*, Ruth Krauss' *Mama I Wish I Was Snow*. Just as useful are Christina Rossetti's *What Is Pink?* and Ryerson Johnson's *Let's Walk Up the Wall*. Modeling their writing and sequence their ideas as well as how to handle a variety of sentence patterns. As Ron Cramer (1975, p. 1011) explains: "Many fine writers and painters have indicated that their writing and painting styles were significantly influenced by the work of other writers and painters. Often, in the process of learning to write or paint these men and women deliberately imitated those writers and painters they admired most. In the past teachers have often avoided imitation, believing it to be harmful or immoral. In fact, it is neither. Imitation should be encouraged, for if one imitates excellence only good can come of it."



**Thinking, Planning, and Writing.** In this section consideration has been given to ways to engage children in thinking out, plotting out, and writing out. Many of these ways start as oral experiences in which children think, plan, and write together, in the process acquiring the skill, self-assurance, and desire to write independently. Writing on their own, children apply the techniques for relating, sequencing, and structuring ideas they have been trying out as a group. Here are a few brief ideas for building writing skills and interest.

1. Writing can be structured to elicit contrast words *however, nevertheless, on the other hand*. For example, a teacher can ask children to express their opinions on an issue, and write these into an experience chart: "Joe, Barbara, Sue, Arnold believe that \_\_\_\_\_ On the other hand, Bruce, Maria, and Jack believe that \_\_\_\_\_"

2. Chain stories in which three children each contribute a section can be structured to help them perceive the three major parts: beginning, middle, and end. Children go individually to a learning station to compose only the beginnings of stories. Story starters are placed in a large envelope tacked up at the station. Later children return to the station, draw at random a story starter from the envelope, add a story middle, and place it in a second envelope. Still later children return again to add an ending to a story chosen at random from the second envelope. When stories are completed, some are projected with the opaque projector, children are asked to add transitional words to make the story parts more cohesive.

3. Children can be encouraged to write a storybook, each page of which starts with the same word or phrase. Words that have worked well for children in the past include

- Listen my children \_\_\_\_\_ (Follow with an outrageous thought)
- Imagine that \_\_\_\_\_ (Stretch your imagination here)
- Come fly with me \_\_\_\_\_ (Tell where, when, why)
- Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_ (Make up something to follow that is fantastic)
- I saw the ugliest \_\_\_\_\_ It looked like \_\_\_\_\_ (At each repetition substitute a new word for ugliest)
- I asked a (an) \_\_\_\_\_ whether \_\_\_\_\_ (At each repetition substitute a different thing in the first blank)
- I met a (an) \_\_\_\_\_ who said to me \_\_\_\_\_ (Invent something different for each repetition)

4. Encourage children to write storybooks, each page of which starts with the same word and includes a contrasting word, such as

- What a stroke of good luck! \_\_\_\_\_



Younger children can each contribute a page to a class book, each page beginning "Did you ever see a tall \_\_\_\_\_?" and including the tall object. Other patterns are: "Did you ever see a tiny \_\_\_\_\_?" "Did you ever see a round \_\_\_\_\_?" "Did you ever see a square \_\_\_\_\_?" Objects named must be things that are never tall, tiny, round, square.

What a disaster! \_\_\_\_\_

(On each page children tell a good fortune and a misfortune)

- Possibly \_\_\_\_\_
- Definitely \_\_\_\_\_
- Unquestionably \_\_\_\_\_
- Maybe \_\_\_\_\_
- Please \_\_\_\_\_
- Please don't \_\_\_\_\_

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Devise an activity to help children identify similarities among related facts. Devise one to help children sequence their ideas logically.
- Design a creative planning guide that children can use to plot out before they write out. In designing the guide, you will find it most helpful to focus on one kind of writing — descriptions, adventure stories, mystery stories. Ask yourself: What are the key components of this form of writing?
- Concoct a recipe for a story after the models given on page 307. Concoct several story starters to place in a story starter box for fourth graders.
- Locate a book or poem that provides a good model for student writing. Identify the elements that make that book a productive model.
- Create some alternating and/or repetitive lines that could provide a structure for student writing in the primary grades or in the upper elementary grades.
- If you are teaching, try one of the above in your class.

### Sentencing

A second grade boy writes a brief paragraph describing his reaction to snow.

*Snow*

Snow it is snowing today everywhere there is snow it is fun to play and you can play snow ball fights and we throw snowballs at each other and berry our selfs and make angels in the snow

John

A fourth grade boy writes a longer paragraph about his mother:

*How mothers are*

When you are sick mother will give you a glass of water and some pills. When you have a problem Mother will help you with it. Some time s when you are bad mother will have to give you a whooping and some time your mother feels sorry when she have did something and blamed it on you. Sometimes when your pants are ripped your mother will have to holler at you. Sometimes when you run away and come back your Mother will be

glad When you burn your clothes she will be very unhappy And when you burn your hand your mother will say you should not play with fire When you write in a school book your mother will holler at you and punish you a hole week

Arnold

What strengths and weaknesses does the reader note in John's and Arnold's writing? Quite clearly, both boys have a wealth of ideas to express. John writes of snowball fights and angels in the snow, Arnold cites specific things he associates with his mother, many of which add interest to his composition. Just as clearly, both John and Arnold have problems manipulating sentences. John has not yet learned where one sentence ends and the next begins, he does not know the signals used to indicate sentence beginnings and endings. On the other hand, Arnold can write complete sentences and can indicate their beginnings and endings. He has moved, moreover, from simple to more complicated sentence patterns. His is a problem of indicating pauses within sentences and of overworking words like *sometimes* and *when* to introduce subordinate ideas. With just a little help, he could be a good writer. Let us consider ways to give that help to children so that they develop skill in handling sentence patterns.

**Acquiring Basic Sentence Sense.** Numbers of students have memorized the definition "A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought." Unfortunately, a sentence is not the only way to express complete thoughts. At times in speaking, people express complete thoughts through single words and through phrases. Today linguists are proposing that a better approach to building sentence sense is to have children manipulate sentence parts and gradually acquire a fundamental understanding of the two-partedness of a sentence and the way writers use capital letters to signal sentence beginnings and punctuation marks to signal sentence ends.

Here is how one teacher went about building a conception of the two-partedness (subject and predicate) of sentences with his third graders (after Hennings, 1977). This type of systematic work tends to be introduced in the third grade, but some schools may begin somewhat earlier, in the second grade.

Mr. Rosenfeld distributed a phrase card to each of the 21 third graders gathered around an open area of classroom floor, reserving one card for himself. The phrases were: *the airplane, Joe and Tom, won the contest, lit up the sky, the fireworks landed safely, all the balloons a girl in my class, two horses, ran away, lost the key, popped at once, disappeared, Sam, ate lunch, John's dog, my bike, twelve boys, barked at the moon, made a homerun the four girls, walked all the way home.* Mr. Rosenfeld had adapted the phrases from an exercise in the language book he was using, Scott Foresman's *Language and How to Use It*. Book 3

Rosenfeld placed his card, *a girl in my class* on the classroom floor, simultaneously remarking, "This doesn't mean much by itself. Does anyone have a card that can combine with this to say something?" A student held up *made a homerun*, and Rosenfeld gestured to the boy to

forming sentences from subjects/predicates

putting the pieces together

combine it with the part already on the floor and to read aloud the resulting sentence. He asked, "Does that sound like a sentence now?" When the children responded with a "yes," he asked again, "Does it look like a sentence?" The children quickly responded with a "no," explaining the need to capitalize the *a* and to end with a period. Mr. Rosenfeld handed a small cuisenaire rod to a student who placed it as a period, he handed a long cuisenaire rod to another student who used it to underline the letter to be capitalized. He did this so that he would not have to write on the cards and so that he could use them again.

perceiving the two-partedness of sentences

Then the teacher split the sentence in two again and inquired, "Can anyone use his/her card to make another sentence from one of these sentence parts?" Marty positioned *won the contest* after a girl in my class and read the resulting sentence. Jill placed the card *Sam* before *made a homerun*. They added capitalization and punctuation signals using the cuisenaire rods. At that point Rosenfeld asked for volunteers to place cards that could serve as the first part of a sentence beneath the subject parts already in place. As one participant positioned *John's dog* in the column and a second positioned *the fireworks*, Rosenfeld placed a card labeled *Subject* at the head of the column and a card labeled *Predicate* at the head of the other column. "Who can add predicate parts to these new subject parts?" he queried.

Eventually all the cards were in position, as indicated on the chart, in some instances children had to shift the pairing of subject and predicate parts to make all sentences meaningful.

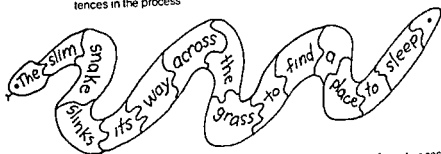
| Sentence | → | Subject            | + | Predicate                |
|----------|---|--------------------|---|--------------------------|
|          |   | A girl in my class |   | won the contest.         |
|          |   | Sam                |   | made a homerun.          |
|          |   | John's dog         |   | barked at the moon.      |
|          |   | The fireworks      |   | lit up the sky.          |
|          |   | Twelve boys        |   | walked all the way home. |
|          |   | The airplane       |   | landed safely.           |
|          |   | Joe and Tom        |   | lost the key.            |
|          |   | All the balloons   |   | popped at once.          |
|          |   | My bike            |   | disappeared.             |
|          |   | Two horses         |   | ran away.                |

Mr. Rosenfeld added other equation forming labels at the top to clarify the two-partedness of sentences, the labels were Sentence  $\longrightarrow$ , and +. Students manipulated the sentence parts shifting subjects and predicates to form other sentences. At times some sentences were rather ridiculous (for example, John's dog lit up the sky) but since they adhered to the subject + predicate equation the players felt that they were valid sentences.

The youngsters next each wrote an original subject/predicate sentence on strips. Each came forward to cut his/her sentence between the subject and predicate and to position the parts on the floor with appropriate punctuation and capitalization. When each child had taken a turn, the teacher gathered up all the cards, dropped them into a large manila envelope, and placed them at the writing center. Children could go there later to form the cards into sentences — silly or meaningful — select three of the sentences and write a humorous paragraph including those three sentences.

FIGURE 8.6 A Sentencing Activity

Cut elongated snakes from oaktag and write a sentence along each length leaving some space between words. Then cut between the words to form jagged puzzle styled shapes. Place pieces of a sentence snake into an envelope. Children go to a learning station to put the snakes together and to form sentences in the process.



In teaching children to comprehend the two-partedness of sentences so that ultimately they write correctly punctuated two-part sentences, Jack Rosenfeld was relying on a technique that involves children actively in putting sentence parts together. He converted the floor into a class composing stage on which children constructed sentences from word and phrase cards and placed punctuation markers. Because this was an oral experience, children not only saw the structure of their sentences but heard the sound. To acquire sentence sense, a child must acquire a sense of both structure and sound. Therefore, the oral visual technique has broad application.

**Writing a Variety of Sentences** Having built sentences from subject and predicate parts, children can try to write ones that pattern in a variety of ways.

**Simple Patterns** Linguists have identified basic or kernel sentence patterns through which people communicate. Although research still has not shown a connection between a child's understanding of these



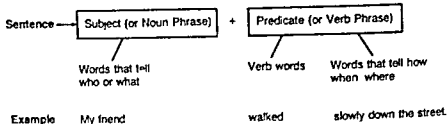
writing sentences with two parts, parts may be called subject and predicate or noun phrase and verb phrase.



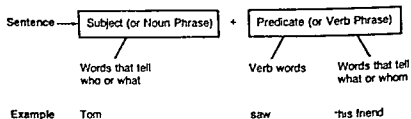
Related sentence-building technique. Split an old window shade in half from bottom to top. Children print subject parts on the left half, predicates on the right. By raising and lowering the left half, children combine subjects with different predicates to make sentences.

FIGURE 8.7 Patterns for Writing

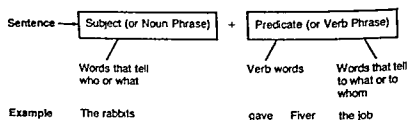
### Pattern 1



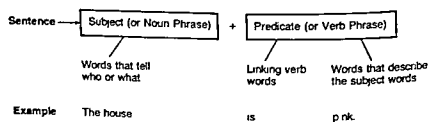
### Pattern 2



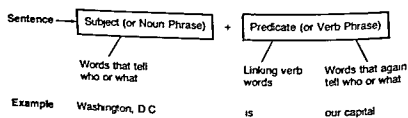
### Pattern 3



### Pattern 4



### Pattern 5



patterns and his/her ability to write a plausible hypothesis is that the child who has had considerable practice writing in many patterns will begin to sense the essence of a sentence (see page 318 for patterns for writing)

Teams can compete to see who can compose within a time period the greatest number of sentences adhering to a particular pattern. Later the class judges sentences as each team displays its sentences written on individual strips and laid out on the floor with labels so that the structure is apparent.

**Expansions** Children can expand sentences or as one language series puts it they can make sentences grow. A fun way is to clip just two words on the sentence clothesline — words such as *alligators* and *swim* — in reverse sentence order. *swim alligators*. Children order the pair and then add adjectives, adverbs and prepositional phrases to the sentence by writing them on cards and clipping the cards to the line. Then they shift to other kernel patterns such as *The monkey spied a tiger*. *The monkey was afraid*. A teacher should keep punctuation cards and capitalization markers ready so that pupils can include the appropriate signals.

If teachers are using a language series that includes an exercise similar to the one shown in the margin, they should use the exercise to reinforce rather than introduce the concept. Teachers have discovered that having children simply complete exercises in a book or workbook does not allow them opportunity to develop the concept fully. There is need for much preliminary oral active sentence building as children work together building, expanding and punctuating sentences.

**Transformations** To encourage sentence building with transformations of the basic patterns, one third grade teacher converts his classroom floor into a composing stage where children construct sentences. Mr. Lombard distributes phrase cards (*run away*, *walk slowly*, *jump the cracks*, *take your turn*, *raise your hand*, *walk open the door*, *turn off that loud radio*, *close the open window*, *get the clock for me*) and numbers of cards bearing the word *you*. He retains one *you* card, placing it on the composing stage and asking, "Who has a predicate part to complete this sentence?" Mr. Lombard gets a half a class of possibilities which are laid beneath a predicate labeling card. Other participants contribute their *you* cards under a subject label. Then Lombard asks students to try to say the sentences without the *yous*. Students by third grade are able to see that the subject parts can be unspoken in commanding. He labels *Imperative* the grouping that results by eliminating *you* and having applied that label, he begins also to refer to the basic kernel patterns as *Declarative Sentences*. The students follow this activity with storywriting in which imperatives are employed repetitively as described in the next section.

Much the same can be done to teach interrogative patterns. A teacher can provide phrase cards: *John has come*, *Susan and my mother have gone shopping*, *my best friend is the winner*, *the two coats are in the barn*, *the radio is too loud*, *the girls are going to Florida for the winter*. Children build sentences from the parts, injecting punctuation and



Suggests  
Students can use a  
pyramid shape as a form  
in which to expand  
sentences.

Alligators swim  
Green alligators swim  
Many green alligators swim

capitalization signals Asked What word must we shift to convert our statements into questions? they shift linking or helping verbs and change the capitalization and punctuation signals They go on to write original questions with appropriate punctuation Eventually a teacher can introduce other patterns that require a question mark — patterns beginning with Which What Where Who Whom When and How or ending with an upward rise of the voice Oral work with question patterns is essential so that pupils relate the question mark with the upward inflection of voice The same is true with exclamations since they have a vocal equivalent — excitement in the voice A fun follow up is to write a repetitive story each page of which begins with a different wh question word

**Repetitive Patterns** Using repetitive patterns Mary Jaye a kindergarten teacher prompts her five year olds to write sentences in a variety of patterns She supplies a pattern for the youngsters who write repetitive books in which each page contains a sentence in the pattern The children first dictate the pages to Ms Jaye or a classroom helper and eventually draw an illustration to accompany each page Later they share their pages with the class Some useful easy patterns are given below Note that they introduce children to declarative interrogative imperative and even exclamatory patterns

- **I Can Books** each page patterns I can \_\_\_\_\_ Can you \_\_\_\_\_? Children write pages like I can run Can you run? I can tiptoe Can you tiptoe?
- **I Like Books** each page begins I like \_\_\_\_\_ and continues with an exclamation Children write pages like I like balloons Pop! I like skating Ouch! I like flying Zoom!
- **Look Books** each page patterns Look! See the \_\_\_\_\_ It is \_\_\_\_\_ Children write Look! See the airplane It is in the sky
- **May I Books** each page patterns May I \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ Exclamation! Children write pages like May I go skating? Skating is fun Crash! May I go swimming? Swimming is fun Splash!

Slightly more sophisticated repetitive patterns are

- **Let's Talk Books** each page patterns Let's talk about \_\_\_\_\_ followed by a line telling something about the item identified in the first sentence
- **Secret Books** the first page asks Do you want to know a secret? Successive pages begin Do you know that \_\_\_\_\_?

Before individual dictation Ms Jaye introduces a pattern by sharing a few examples orally and by brainstorming some similar sentences with the children Only then do individuals dictate to a scribe At first of course children's books will be simple for this is a beginning for them Nickey Katzenbach for example wrote a See Book just before Christmas

See Nickey  
See Santa Claus



I remembered that \_\_\_\_\_  
Lazying along \_\_\_\_\_  
I saw that \_\_\_\_\_  
Rushing by \_\_\_\_\_  
I knew that \_\_\_\_\_

(Children concoct additional lines that begin with an -ing word; they can change the -ing word supplied in the model.)

**Combining Sentences.** Students can compose within given patterns to learn how to handle sentence-combining processes, or what has been called "compounding." This was seen in the lesson with *Rosie's Walk* described earlier, in which children wrote sentences with a string of prepositional phrases and verbs based on story models. It is easy to write pieces with a series of prepositional phrases. Here is a simple pattern for writing:

I dashed down the alley,  
around the corner,  
across the street.

(Children add words that tell where.)

Or students play with a series of imperative verbs, at the same time playing with synonyms. A basic pattern for writing is *Don't run. Walk.* Children string out a series of walk-synonyms down the page to produce a poem-like piece similar in structure to some pieces by Eve Merriam:



A good source is Eve Merriam, *It Doesn't Always Have to Rhyme* (Wolfe City, Tex.: Atheneum, 1965)

Don't run.  
Walk,  
stroll,  
saunter,  
slow up,  
shuffle along,  
creep by,  
dilly-dally,  
poke along,  
take your time, and  
drag your feet.  
There is no rush, you know.

Words or phrases that work as easily are *Wake up! Stop! Start! Eat! Work!* Students refer to the thesaurus to find words to string with these beginning words or phrases.

Sentence combining patterns are of an endless variety. One variation is to start with an abstraction and provide specific examples as in

Noise is the radio blaring late at night,  
people shouting at one another,  
trucks roaring  
horns blasting

Other beginnings to this combining pattern include Freedom is , Honesty is , Friendship is , Brown is . This is a tricky pattern to manipulate, for each item in the series must be parallel in structure to others. For example, if the first item in the series names something, all items must name something. If the first item starts with an -ing word, all must.

Easier patterns are

- He gave me a/an \_\_\_\_\_, in which the writer strings together a series of object words separated by commas
- As I went walking, I spied \_\_\_\_\_, in which the writer composes a list of fantastic things encountered. One sky blue rhinoceros, two unhappy gophers, three generous kings. The result is a rigmarole if numbers increase within the series. Older children will enjoy starting each item with the same beginning sound as in one wonderfully washed window, two twirling trees and so forth
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, in which the writer places a lengthy and imaginative phrase in each slot

It is important to introduce appropriate punctuation as part of the sentence pattern and to include it in the model. One child prints the model with commas and conjunctions on a large sheet. Others check their original versions against the model to determine whether they have punctuated it accurately. This is fundamental in patterns where failure to include a comma and/or a conjunction can produce run-ons — as would be the case if the writer is stringing a series of imperative verbs together. Children handling that pattern should consider why the *and* is an essential part of the sentence.

Because writing run-on sentences is such a common error, teachers will need to stress ways of combining sentences so that young writers avoid the run-on trap. One way is to provide students with pairs of sentence strips they can join with the aid of comma and conjunction.

Examples

- I ran after Sue  
I could not catch her
- In 1976 we went to France  
In 1977 we went to England

I ran after Sue, but I could  
not catch her.  
In 1976 we went to France,  
whereas in 1977 we went to  
England.

Children hang the strips on the sentence line with the aid of conjunction cards and punctuation markers. Eventually they write a sentence equation.

Combined Sentence → Subject + Predicate, Conjunction  
Subject + Predicate

Children write samples that adhere to the equation with advanced students progressing to more sophisticated equations

Combined Sentence → Subject + Predicate,  
Subject + Predicate, Conjunction  
Subject + Predicate

Within the requirements of the equation, young people write their own samples, oftentimes drawing on imaginative content to give their sentences a fantastic quality. Later, editing their original composi-

Combined Sentence → Subject + Predicate,  
Subject + Predicate

tions, they refer to the equations, writing troublesome patterns inside their writing folders. After composing, children check their sentences against the equations to determine if they have included the conjunction and commas where necessary.

**Inserting Sentences** By middle grades young people begin to rely on complex sentences to express involved relationships. Most youngsters need some help structuring and punctuating the sophisticated sentences they are now composing. This is the time to try a class activity or two in which children together build longer sentences by inserting one into another.

In preparation several students write out a series of phrase and punctuation cards such as the ones given below.

Connecting Words,  
or Subordinators

although, since, while, when,  
after, just as, if, as, wherever,  
because

Verb Phrases

was predicted, rained, was  
late, missed the bus, am her  
best friend, invited me to her  
party, was in the gym, put the  
balls away, arrived, climbed  
on, had been in school ten  
minutes, dismissed us, was  
getting interested, ended, will  
study tonight, will get an "A"

tomorrow go is right behind  
me entered the room stopped  
talking

she the school bus we the  
principal the lesson my dog  
everyone some snow it I  
and 10 additional I cards

Ten comma cards

Ten period cards

Numbers of long cuisenaire  
rods to mark capitals

Four SUBJECT labels four  
PREDICATE labels two  
SUBORDINATOR labels

Noun Phrases

Commas

Periods

Capitals

Labels

Students distribute the cards except for *the principal* and the labels. The teacher places *the principal* on the composing floor or tapes it to the board and asks students to contribute a predicate part to complete the sentence. Children place the period and capitalization marker in the sentence. Those who think they have possible SUBJECT parts place or tape their cards beneath *the principal* which they can label SUBJECT. Students next try to fit their predicate cards to the subject parts already in place labeling that column PREDICATE. By juggling cards young people should be able to build twenty sentences. They add punctuation and capitalization markers to form law abiding sentences. Incidentally since punctuation and capitalization are part of the conventions of writing the phrase law abiding is helpful to beginners.

When all the parts are in place children check each sentence to identify non law abiding ones. There will be numbers since twenty sentences will have been composed and only ten period cards provided.

The next job is to rehabilitate the non law abiding sentences. With guidance children can transform two sentences with the aid of the subordinators they still hold by inserting one within another. A result may be *Although some snow was predicted it rained*. On board or floor they add the comma between the parts and add labels so that the pattern is apparent. Students continue to build other sentences by placing word and phrase cards below those in the model sentence.

|              |           |                    |  |         |                         |  |
|--------------|-----------|--------------------|--|---------|-------------------------|--|
| Subordinator | Subject   | Predicate          |  | Subject | Predicate's             |  |
| Although     | some snow | was predicted      |  | it      | rained                  |  |
| Because      | I         | am her best friend |  | she     | invited me to her party |  |

When children have inserted and juggled cards to form ten sentences, they take the next step — shifting a sentence so that the subordinator is between the clauses, and taking out the comma as in *It rained although some snow was predicted*. Using the remaining labeling cards, children construct the equation for the pattern and shift the other sentences into the new pattern

| Subject | Predicate          | Subordinator | Subject | Predicate |  |
|---------|--------------------|--------------|---------|-----------|--|
| My dog  | is right behind me | wherever     | I       | go        |  |

Groups of three can repeat the activity with the same cards at a learning station where they go for additional practice with the pattern. Later the cards are mounted on a bulletin board where the sentences provide a visual reminder of writing patterns.

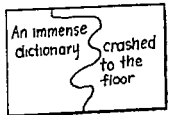
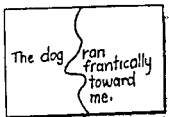
Having begun to build an understanding of sentence-inserting patterns, children should write original sentences. If participants write their sentences clearly on strips, they cut them apart between clauses and try to mix and match parts with parts friends have written. A visually striking activity is to stick the first half of a long sentence strip to the left side of a classroom corner with the second half taped to its right. The corner forms a visual reminder of the junction between the halves, a junction occupied by subordinator or comma.

Once students have manipulated complex sentences, they tape equations for the patterns and model sentences to the inside of their writing folders. When editing pieces for "publication," writers check their sentences against the models to see if they have written any complex sentences and have punctuated correctly.

**Sentencing: A Cross-Section of Activities.** One of the most basic writing skills a person must acquire is ability to compose sentences. As has been shown, this skill does not come simply from memorizing a pat definition. It most probably comes through many diverse encounters with sentences and sentence writing. For this reason schools daily must provide children with the opportunity to hear, write, and manipulate sentences, engaging them simultaneously in fundamental aspects of sentence design — use of periods of exclamation and question marks at ends of sentences, of commas in complex sentence patterns, of capital letters at sentence starts. Below are a few brief ideas for more sentence work.

1. Make a set of at least 20 sentence card dominoes, domino cards carry a verb or noun phrase on each end. Three players receive four domino cards from a dealer. One domino is exposed on the table. Each player takes a turn trying to build a sentence by attaching a card to others in the chain on the table. A player who cannot attach a card draws one from the deck. The next player then takes a turn. The player who first empties his/her hand is declared winner. Note: Sentences formed must make sense, with the dealer acting as judge.

- 2 Make two part puzzles in jigsaw style with subjects on one part predicates on the other Cut a number of such puzzles from index cards and mix in a box Children must match subject puzzle parts with predicate puzzle parts



- 3 Supply a list of possible subjects such as *a twisting tree, the whistling wind, Joe and Jack, a long and deserted road, a steady rain, a dirt path, a cold little dog, I, one truck, two black automobiles*. Children write sentences that start with the given subject parts. Then they select at least three to write into a story.
- 4 Supply a list of possible predicates such as *was knocked down, struck the ground, ran as fast as possible, called the police, opened the door slowly, placed a hand on the knob, heard a squeaky noise in the distance, looked out the window into the stormy night*. Children write sentences ending with the given predicates. They select at least three of their sentences to include in a story.
- 5 Encourage children to manipulate a variety of other patterns working from models such as Christina Rossetti's *Wind*.

Who has seen the wind?

Neither I nor you

But when the leaves hang trembling

The wind is passing through

Who has seen the wind?

Neither you nor I

But when the leaves bow down their heads

The wind is passing by

Children begin their own versions with questions like *Who has heard the snow? Who has touched the moon? Who has heard the grass? Who has held the rain?* Encourage children to create their original *Who has* \_\_\_\_\_? first lines

- 6 Children who have written in the Rossetti questioning pattern can experiment with other questions to repeat as part of each line or at the beginning of each thought unit. Basic patterns are *Why do* \_\_\_\_\_? *When will* \_\_\_\_\_? *Where are* \_\_\_\_\_?



Langston Hughes begins lines in his poem "April Rain Song" with the words "Let the rain -"

A second group of words in the same poem begins with "The rain -"

Children writing about snow, wind, hail, sunshine can borrow this pattern

- \_\_\_\_\_? How can \_\_\_\_\_? What is \_\_\_\_\_? In structuring their writing, children can alternate a questioning line with a statement line. Allow time for oral sharing so that children have the opportunity to interpret punctuation vocally.
- 7 A pleasurable experience is to interpret fundamental sentence punctuation with sounds. Read a paragraph to the class stopping at each punctuation marker. Listeners must interject the appropriate punctuation by making a predetermined sound: ding-dong = exclamation, plunk plunk = period, whooo = question mark, coooo = comma.

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Use the lesson sequence on pages 324-26 as a model for structuring a lesson on dialog or direct quotation. Prepare the necessary sentence cards and punctuation markers for students to use in building sentences like "Watch out for the undertow!" shouted Bruce. Be sure to vary 'saying' words, include *called out*, *exclaimed*, *cried*, *whispered* for example. Think too about how you could use comic strips to introduce the concept of dialog.
- Locate a poem or story that you feel would serve as a good one for introducing children to a particular sentence pattern. Structure an activity based on the poem or story you have found. To get started in doing this exercise, check Eric Carle's *The Mixed up Chameleon*. With its repetitive if-then pattern, this delightful book is superb for introducing the cause and effect sentence structure.
- Concoct a line through which children can practice a particular pattern. For example, to practice adjective clauses, children write lines beginning "I saw a \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_". In the blanks they write outrageous content: "I saw a wild lion that was larger than ten regular lions." "I saw a monstrous leopard that was covered with pink spots."
- Try one of your ideas with a group.

### Writing to Communicate — A Summary Thought or Two

Experienced teachers know how important it is to help children acquire the thinking and sentencings skills so necessary if written communication is to be effective. As this chapter has pointed out, ability to think is an integral part of writing skill. Children must know how to relate ideas and sequence them; they must be able to plan out what they are going to write. Some ways to help children grow in requisite thinking/writing skills developed within the chapter include composing within the limits of a predetermined structure, pre-planning on plotting guides, and separating brainstormed facts into related groupings of facts.

Sentencing skills are equally necessary. Children must acquire basic sentence sense so that they will write out complete sentences rather than fragments or run-ons. They must be able to compose a variety of sentence patterns, expand and transform basic patterns, combine and insert sentences. In the next chapter we will consider other skill areas related to punctuation, capitalization and usage.

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## Understanding language and language usage—managing the whole lot

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”  
 “The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”  
 “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all.”  
 Alice was much too puzzled to say anything, so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. “They’ve a temper some of them—particularly verbs; they’re the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs—however, I can manage the whole lot of them!”

*Through the Looking Glass*

Fourth graders were gathered around that portion of open classroom floor known to them as the Composing Stage. The reading group had just read silently the fable “The Rooster and the Pearl” in *The Magic Word*. Rather than asking questions to check children’s comprehension of the fable, Jeanne Smith used a word and phrase card technique. She had composed a series of cards that when put together summarized “The Rooster and the Pearl.” The cards were *A rooster, Aha, He, A farmer’s wife, She, Well, He, To each his own, he said, pecked happily at his corn, said the rooster, I, snatched it up with delight, saw the pearl, picked up the pearl, and, he said, came upon a pearl, here is something to eat, discovered it was not corn, would rather have food than pearls*. As one can see by analyzing these words and phrases, Jeanne Smith had cut up eight sentences, generally dividing each sentence or clause between subject and predicate, but maintaining as units conversational indicators such as *he said* and *said the rooster*.

At random she distributed the cards to the children and directed “Hold up your cards so that everyone can see what we have here.” Then she asked, “Who do you think holds a card that could begin the story of ‘The Rooster and the Pearl’?” Working from that question and cooperating orally in the endeavor, the young people reconstructed the story from the cards. In so doing, they were forced to juggle pieces already in place so that the story would flow logically and all pieces would fit into the Story Puzzle.

Ms. Smith had the children read the lines of the story aloud, expressing meaning with their voices and pausing where necessary. When they had reread their reconstructed story, one student remarked that the sentences did not have any punctuation to signal the pauses that were needed when reading. These youngsters had been working on punctuation and were developing a conception of the relationship between punctuation and communication of sentence meaning. At that point, Ms. Smith took out her punctuation blocks, small rectangular sections of wood that she had painted white and on which she had drawn commas, periods, ques-

→  
 building words and  
 phrases into logically  
 sequenced sentences

tion marks exclamation marks and quotation marks. Each block held two marks, one on each of two opposite faces. She distributed the blocks to the participants. One by one children added marks to the sentences laid out on the Composing Stage. Because this was one of the first structured experiences they had had with punctuation of direct quotations, the teacher had to assist. She referred the group to the version of the story written in their basal reading book to discover how to place the comma or period in relation to the quotation marks at the end of a group of words spoken. Young people modeled their punctuation after the way it was done in the book.

When all the sentences had been punctuated according to the conventions of written usage, the teacher guided the group to discover generalizations about punctuation of direct quotations based on the specific instances contained in the reconstructed story. Her first question was: What words are placed within the quotation marks?

Sherie supplied the answer: Words that are said. On a large piece of charting paper, the teacher recorded Sherie's generalization.

#### *Sherie's Generalization*

*We place words that are said within quotation marks.*

Jeanne Smith continued: Where do we put the comma or period in relation to the quotation mark at the end of a group of words spoken? Timothy answered this time: In front of the end quotation mark. His words became the second point on the punctuation guidelines chart.

#### *Tim's Generalization*

*We put the period or comma in front of the end quotation mark.*

One more generalization, please! added the teacher. Let's consider how we handle an exclamation point when the words spoken are an exclamation. Sylvia generalized this time, and her words became a third point on the punctuation chart.

#### *Sylvia's Generalization*

*When words spoken are an exclamation, we put the exclamation point in front of the end quotation mark.*

Look now at the quotation mark at the beginning of a group of words spoken, urged Ms. Smith. How do we handle that? Timothy was quick to respond: A beginning quotation mark comes right before the words spoken. He clarified: There's no other mark between the quote mark and the words. Tim's point became the fourth generalization on the group chart.

At that point Ms. Smith gathered up the punctuation marks and redistributed them. The students added the marks again to the story, but this time each participant had to indicate which generalization on the class chart was guiding his/her action. Having reset the punctuation, students expanded the story by adding first adjectives, then adverbs, and finally prepositional phrases.

Since The Rooster and the Pearl was the last of a series of fables that the youngsters had been reading, they knew the qualities inherent in the fable form and were eager to write their own fables in the Fables by Us



discovering how to punctuate units of direct conversation



generalizing about punctuation conventions



relating specific problems to generalizations

Station that the teacher had ready for them. Now Jeanne Smith mounted the group punctuation chart as the station backdrop and suggested that as they wrote, they might include some direct conversation to add impact to their fables. In this way, they would be applying the generalizations immediately in their own writing. One fourth grader wrote.

### *The Rainbow*

Once there was a hunter who wanted to catch a rainbow. The rainbow hung over a cliff. One rainy day the hunter was out hunting animals. When the rain stopped, he saw the rainbow and said, "I will catch it so my life will always be warm." He tried to reach it, and he fell off the cliff!

Moral: *Don't reach for something for yourself that belongs to everyone.*

Kim Lechner

At a second station the teacher gathered the punctuation blocks and the sentence strips for the fable "The Rooster and the Pearl." Students could go to the station to reconstruct and punctuate the story independently.

### **Learning about Oral Language Usage and Written Conventions**

The teacher just described used the story in the basal reading book as a springboard from which to help children understand more fully the relationships between intonation in oral language and punctuation in written expression, particularly as punctuation is conventionally handled in direct quotations. Simultaneously, Jeanne Smith was helping children think through the logical sequencing of story events as they reconstructed the fable after having read a longer version. Hers was a creative technique to check reading comprehension and to guide children in discovering some of the conventions that have grown up about written language usage. Let us consider in detail basic guidelines that are helpful in structuring similar discovery sessions.

**Beginning with the Oral Language.** Because written language reflects to a great extent the spoken language, teachers will want to begin many language-study sessions with interaction in which speaking or oral interpretation of written forms is an integral part. Children orally play with and hear standard patterns until these begin to feel and sound natural to them. This is fundamental, especially for youngsters whose first language or dialect is not standard English. In these cases, a teacher may invite students to express a sentence first in their own dialect and then translate it into standard English, so that they are working simultaneously with their own *everyday talk* and with what can be called *school talk*.

It is relatively easy to begin with language generated by students. For example, if a teacher's goal is to help children feel natural with the sounds of nouns and verbs that agree in number, students can together prepare sentence cards that adhere to a simple noun-verb-noun pattern and in which present tense verbs are made to agree with subject nouns. Children model their sentences after either of two the teacher supplies.

Models are printed out on sentence strips and placed on the composing stage. As children generate sentences patterning in the same way, they write the sentences on other strips and place them under the first or second sentence depending on the number of 'doers' involved. In the process, students speak and reread the sentences generated. If students generate sentences with subjects and predicates that do not agree in number with standard oral usage, they label a portion of the composing stage *Everyday Talk* and a second portion *School Talk and Talk Written Down*. As they generate sentences not part of standard usage, they list these under *Everyday Talk*.

On another day the teacher brings in the sentence strips children have concocted based on the two models, now, however, the strips have been clipped between subject and predicate parts. Children must put together the sentence puzzles, mating a subject part with an 'agreeable' predicate part. Again as students pair their phrase strips into agreeable parts they read and reread the resulting sentences so that the sounds begin to feel natural to the ear. On first playing the Agreeable Parts Game children generally construct sentences with sensible meanings. But on replaying, they mate agreeable parts that make "silly sense," producing sentences such as *Boys pull logs* and *An elephant eats pizza*.

On still another day students play the Oral Expansion Game. They expand their agreeable kernel sentences, each orally adding a word or phrase to a base sentence that grows bigger and bigger on each rereading. They expand silly agreeable sentences in the same way. This is an oral activity that provides opportunity for players to hear subject nouns and verbs that agree in number.

As follow-up two or more youngsters interact in a learning station where there is a pouch of subject strips (some with a singular noun and others with a plural noun). Children working orally together generate predicate parts to accompany the subjects. In a second pouch are predicate parts, children now must orally generate agreeable subject parts. Or youngsters can play Mix and Match, combining on a table or floor surface strips from the subject pouch with agreeable ones from the predicate pouch.

**Applying Understanding to Writing** Children who have worked in an interactive setting with sentences that focus on a particular language usage should begin to apply their growing understanding to their writing. Structured writing is particularly useful in this context. For example, children who have been playing orally with agreeable subjects and predicates may write in patterns that force them to generate subjects and verbs that agree in number. These youngsters listen to Evelyn Beyers' poem

### Jump or Jiggle

Frogs jump  
Caterpillars hump



Play the Oral Transformation Game with children making questions and negative statements from the agreeable kernel sentences.

Worms wiggle.

Bugs jiggle.

Rabbits hop.

Horses clop.

Snakes slide.

Sea gulls glide.

Mice creep.

Deer leap.

Puppies bounce.

Kittens pounce.

Lions stalk —

But —

*I walk!*

They go on to write nonrhyming lines that pattern similarly with only two words to the line. Later they change over to the singular and write pieces that pattern after *A frog jumps* and *A caterpillar humps*. A young child can write one line to a page, a page he/she illustrates to show the number, singular or plural, of the subject. Incidentally, this type of art activity is a conceivable introduction to the notion of singular and plural for the kindergartner and first grader. As the teacher shares a different line each day, children illustrate it to show the number of involved subjects.

*Patterns for Writing.* It is not too difficult to find patterns for writing that reinforce language usage conventions. Books like Eve Merriam's *It Doesn't Always Have to Rhyme* and *There Is No Rhyme for Silver* are goldmines that belong on every classroom library shelf. Ms. Merriam supplies "Spring Fever," in which every line patterns after *Danny dawdles*. Students can write similar alliterative lines about each class member, making the subject noun and the verb sound agreeable. She supplies "The Cat Sat on the Mat" in which lines contain words like *They frisk, They scramble, They tickle, They tangle*. Children can write similar pieces about other animals in which they itemize animal activity. In the process young writers will generate sentences which pattern simply: *They \_\_\_\_\_*. Later students compose single animal

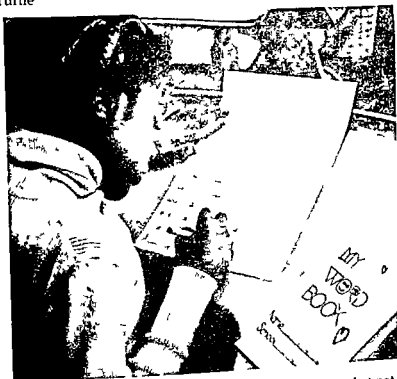
(verb)

poems in which lines pattern after *My cat snarls* or *My cat purrs*.

Other pieces reinforce different language learnings. In "Mr. Zoo" Ms. Merriam repeatedly substitutes *he's* for *he is*. Students working with contractions can model original pieces after it. In "I, Says the Poem" she plays with direct quotation. Children who are learning about how conversation is written down on paper can select a literary form, an animal, a plant, or an object and speak for it, modeling the piece after the Merriam one and in the process apply growing understanding of punctuation of quotations.

Other writers can be just as helpful in supplying patterns for applying newly developed understanding of language conventions. For example, Vachel Lindsay's "There was a little turtle / He lived in a

box" is a good piece for playing with past tense. Now instead of describing all the things a chosen animal does, children write a piece describing things the animal did, modeling their pieces after Lind say's "Turtle."



Developing writing skills through meaningful activity

Similarly teachers can structure experience story writing so that patterns they want to reinforce are generated. After a listening/show and-tell time, for instance, one third grade teacher summarized with the children what was shared by each during talk time. Ms. Shemansky started with an introductory statement: "Here is what we shared today." Then she asked children to itemize what was shared. Mary Jo's father, Sallie's turtle, Stephen's "magic" boots, Jed's sore cut. She wrote down all items shared, the result being numbers of examples in the possessive form. Later she cut up the story so that each item was divided into three parts, as in *Mary Jo's*, *'s*, and *father*. Children reconstructed the pieces so that "the objects belong to the right people." Such structured cooperative writing activity should play an important role in primary grade language programs.

Structured group writing can play a similarly important role in upper grades as an introduction to more sophisticated writing patterns. To introduce appositives, one sixth grade teacher used structured writing based on a shared story. He read George McDermott's *The Stonecutter* to a group. Then he invited the students to summarize on individual sentence strips the main events of the story, with each sentence patterning after an initial one he provided. The teacher's sentence was

Not viable by reading  
Janice Udry, *What Mary Jo Shared* (Chicago: Whitman, 1966)

Tanaku the stonecutter wished to be a prince so that he could have great wealth



Young people patterning after that one, contributed sentences like

Try having children read their sentences with only one comma to find if the comma is in the right place to see how important the comma is in communicating meaning

Tanaku the prince, wished to be the sun so that he could have great power  
Tanaku the sun wished to be the cloud so that he could be more powerful.

In composing these sentences, the students relied as had the teacher on the appositive construction, which they used accurately by modeling their sentences after his. As an independent writing activity, the students wrote original stories about Obara, the fisherman, about Timaro, the teacher, about Nikimo, the painter. In their stories, the character successively became other people or things.

**Nonpatterned Writing** Teachers will, of course, want to encourage in spontaneous and nonpatterned writing the application of language conventions on which they have been working orally. To do this, one provides the class with a generalized model against which they judge their own writing during the preparation of a revised draft. That model can be the sentences students have generated according to a specific pattern during group interaction and have written up on sentence strips. It can also be the sentences from a story that the students have reconstructed after having read or heard a longer version, this was the case in Jeanne Smith's session based on "The Rooster and the Pearl." Once students have punctuated story sentences, the strips are transferred from the Composing Stage to the bulletin board area adjacent to the related writing station. There the strips serve as a reference as children complete writing assignments that call forth a writing skill previously considered in group session.

To enable children to apply their understanding of language conventions as they write and revise, the teacher must relate writing activity to the aspects of language usage being stressed. In this respect, Jeanne Smith's selection of "The Rooster and the Pearl" was an ideal choice of material to use in teaching conventions related to direct quotation. Fables generally contain much direct conversation characters — be they human, animal, plant or object — speak back and forth. Therefore in writing original fables young people in Ms. Smith's group would be intimately involved with dialog — something with which they had just worked and something they could review as they wrote by referring to the sentence models available in the writing center. In this respect, too, the sixth grade teacher's selection of *The Stonecutter* was an ideal one for study of appositives — especially since he invited children to write similar sequences where they would have to generate sentences containing appositives. Through careful pairing of both introductory story material and follow up writing activity a teacher can assure direct carry over from language usage sessions to writing sessions.

**Working from Written Samples of Language** In some instances as is the case with placement of punctuation marks inside or outside of

quotation marks the language convention being taught is strictly a written one — sometimes more arbitrary than logical. As a result there are no intonational clues to guide the writer in deciding whether to capitalize how to punctuate or what form to use. In these cases the teacher must start with samples of written language that young people are reading. Students refer to the samples to decide what to do in a particular problem situation being considered. Working with a basal reading text teacher and students can select samples of written language from it so that they can move smoothly from reading activity to writing activity to develop extended language arts experiences.

Think again about the learning teaching episode with *The Rooster and the Pearl* and recall that Jeanne Smith asked students to study the story in their books to see how to handle the relationship between comma and quotation marks at the end of a unit of conversation. In punctuating their own reconstruction of that fable they modeled their form after one in a respected source in general use. They analyzed that source to see how the language as written down tends to be handled.

An alternative but still analytical approach is to collect a wide sampling of sentences in which the language has been handled in a similar way — for instance samples showing use of commas in series capitalization of proper names use of apostrophes to indicate possession — whatever is the focus of the language experience. Young people study the models to determine how to handle similar forms in their class and individual writing. A similar approach is to provide children with stories in which many related forms have been employed. Children analyze how a particular aspect of language is being handled in the selection and then write similarly styled stories in which they handle language in the same fashion. For example upper grade children studying adjective forms — *big bigger biggest* and *gigantic more gigantic most gigantic* — can discover how to handle these variations in adjective form in their writing by looking at tall tales. Since these are sometimes filled with *mosts* *ests* *mores* and *ers* young people will be able to extract any number of sentences to serve as models as they go on to compose original tall tales filled with comparatives and superlatives.

When upper graders extract sentences from their reading and compose additional ones to serve as writing models they write the sentences on strips which — as they interact — are laid out on the Composing Stage. Some teachers like Jeanne Smith have found that it pays to make available separate punctuation markers rather than placing the punctuation directly on the strips with the pen. In this way children can later return to the punctuation less sentences and review the basic concepts by resetting the punctuation markers. A teacher can make punctuation markers as Jeanne Smith did by cutting narrow strips of wood into small blocks and painting punctuation marks on two sides of each block so they are reversible. Instead of wood blocks one can use the white caps often found on juice bottles styrofoam trays cut into rectangles or pieces of index cards as punctuation markers. An advantage of this technique is that young people physically placing punctuation markers on the Composing Stage are



For example: *Mr. G. nsbu g. How the Sun Was Brough Ba k to the Sky* (New York: Macmillan 1975) is a good one to reconstruct to show punctuation of words in series. Late children can write original cumulative tales.



involved directly in the process of punctuating. Likewise, one can construct capitalization markers, perhaps a short length of colored wood or paper, to place under a letter to be capitalized. Cuisenaire rods from the mathematics shelf can be commandeered for the purpose.

**Discovering and Stating Generalizations.** A second advantage of laying out sentences on a Composing Stage and adding punctuation and capitalization markers is that the markers stand out from the rest of the sentence parts and trigger discovery of relationships about the way written language operates. At some point, children will begin to describe succinctly the workings of their language system; they put together a general statement that describes how in English, people tend to handle certain patterns, especially in written communication. In this respect, young people function as descriptive linguists.

The charts on which young people's language generalizations are recorded can be clipped together to become a big "flip book" called *How to Write It! How to Say It!* that hangs in the classroom. Writers editing and revising their own compositions can flip through the pages to locate a generalization that guides them as they encounter a particular language usage problem. Generally the big book is left open to the page of generalizations just discovered and recently recorded by the group, or that page is removed for the time being from the big book, to be mounted in the writing center.

Generalizing takes place only after children have generated and/or extracted from written material numerous sentences that contain the same usage pattern. For example, youngsters who have generated sentences that tell about actions they carried out yesterday, study their samples of oral language-written-down to figure out what clues they build into their sentences to communicate that the action happened in the past. Eventually they generalize that the form of the verb and the word *yesterday* are important clues. To test their generalization, students orally transform their sentences to communicate instead that the action is happening today. They compare the two verb forms to determine the way it changes as the time relationship changes. Writing follows analysis. Having analyzed the clues that tell readers that something occurred in the past, young people write stories that happened in the past. I met George Washington, I was on the Titanic. I spoke to Julius Caesar, I was on the Mayflower are kinds of topics that require the past tense. Those titles are samples from which young writers can develop their own by choosing a person, place or event from the past.

This example suggests the structure that investigations of language conventions having some reflection in speech can assume.

- 1 generation by students of many language samples that are similar, to assure similarity of samples, the teacher provides a pattern for sentence generation,
- 2 analysis of sentences generated to discover common features
- 3 verbalization and recording of generalizations to serve later as guides for revising and rewriting

- 4 writing in response to assignments structured so that students must apply the generalizations

In like manner students generalize from sentences extracted from their reading. For example, encountering the difference in the written form between *it s* and *its*, young people can generalize from silly homonym stories like this one:

#### Is It *It s* or Is It *Its*?

It s a nice day today, said the oak tree to the weeping willow.  
The willow shook its branches at the oak and bent its trunk down. I don't think it s so nice. It looks as if it s about to rain.

The oak waved its highest branches in the air and answered: It s all in your roots how you view the weather. It s a fine day if you think it is. It s a bit cloudy, but it s spring. Now it s time to wave and toss about. The oak turned its bark upon the weeping willow and waved and tossed its branches higher into the air. Poor willow, the oak said to itself. It s just unfortunate that it cannot forget its troubles and enjoy this fresh spring day.

To guide discovery of generalizations a teacher asks: What is the meaning of *it s* in the first sentence? of *its* in the second sentence? As is true with homonyms, the difference lies in the meaning being communicated: a difference that youngsters can figure out for themselves. Having generalized that *it s* is used whenever the meaning is *it is* and that *its* is used whenever the meaning is ownership, children follow up by writing their own silly *its it s* stories in which they repeatedly use *its* and *it s*.

The structure of this lesson serves as a model for classroom study of many language conventions that have no reflection in speech.

- 1 study of written samples that focus on a particular usage problem
- 2 generalization based on the samples
- 3 writing that requires the application of the generalization

**Conventional Language Usage Today** Differences of opinion exist as to which language generalizations children in elementary school should discover and apply and whether speakers of nonstandard dialects should be asked to add standard patterns to their speaking and writing repertoires. Certainly most language specialists agree that antiquated forms not representative of current language usage in either its standard oral or its informal written form do not belong in the curriculum. These conventions no longer applicable include forms like *It is I* and admonitions not to split infinitives and drop prepositions at the ends of sentences — conventions no longer adhered to by even the best of writers. On the other hand, there are some generalizations about usage that describe the language as typically spoken and/or written in the United States today. Analysis of current language usage patterns indicates, for instance, a way in which verbs are handled in most conversation and writing to show changes in time relationships and to agree with subject nouns. Although some dialects of oral English differ from more generally found patterns of verb usage, most writing — whether in books, magazines, newspapers, flyers, and



Encourage children to write similar fun stories in which they repeat sets of homonyms. Good for this purpose are bear/bare, they're/the're, the e and par/pear.

pamphlets — conforms to a handful of generalizations regarding verb functioning

Today most language arts textbook series and school district language arts curriculum guides present language generalizations, such as those about verb usage, that have wide application and typify most writing in newspapers and magazines. These generalizations include conventional ways of using —

#### *Sentences in writing*

- capitalization at the beginning of sentences,
- capitalization at the beginning of direct quotations,
- punctuation at the end of sentences that state, question, exclaim, and command,
- punctuation at the end of direct quotations,

#### *Paragraphs in writing*

- indentation of the first word of each new paragraph or skipping lines between paragraphs as in formal business letters,
- start of new paragraphs to show major thought units or units of conversation spoken by different people,

#### *Capitalization in writing*

- capitalization of proper nouns, including names of people, towns, cities, states, counties, countries, planets, continents, rivers, mountains, oceans, months, days of the week, organizations, institutions, and so forth,
- capitalization of what in the past was called a proper adjective, words such as *English* language, *March* winds, *Mexican* flag,
- capitalization of most important words in titles of books, magazines, newspapers,
- capitalization of titles of distinction such as *President* Jefferson, *King* Louis, *Mr*, *Ms*, *Dr*,

#### *Punctuation in writing*

- punctuation of series patterns, dates and addresses, direct address, direct quotations, abbreviations, appositives, parenthetical expressions, yes/no patterns, subordinating and coordinating patterns, letter greeting and salutation,

#### *Nouns and verbs*

- verb tenses and irregular verb forms,
- helping verbs or auxiliaries,
- possessive and plural forms of nouns,
- forms of noun substitutes in constructions like *She gave it to Mary and them*
- agreement of subject noun and predicate verb
- contractions as in *can't*,
- negatives,

#### *Special cases*

- distinctions between words such as *teach/learn*
- restriction of *ain't* to very informal speaking

Because most language programs today help children build and refine these sentencings, paragraphing capitalization, punctuation, and noun/verb usage skills, let us consider briefly some ways to involve children in skill-building activity

*Sentencing and Paragraphing in Writing* Especially with young children some stress should be placed on how to begin and end sentences. An early introduction is through the sentences children generate as they dictate experience stories. After introductory composing sessions, a teacher goes back and notes with the children the sentence beginnings, asking participants how the sentence beginnings are similar. If they have had prior work distinguishing upper and lower case letters, they will be able to explain that sentence beginnings are capitalized. Now as the teacher records for children who know how to write capital letter forms, he/she hands the floor pen to a youngster who writes down on the story chart the beginning capital letter of a sentence to be recorded next.

Simultaneously, young children work with sentence endings. As suggested earlier in this book, children composing together add the marks that signal sentence ends and reread what they have cooperatively composed to express the sentence signals with vocal inflections. Later as the teacher orally reads the story, stopping at sentence ends, the children can quickly hold up period, question mark, or exclamation mark cards at appropriate points. Soon children should independently be able to pick out sentence beginnings using capitalization and punctuation as clues.

If children are using a basal reader, they can be prepared for eventual writing of sentence beginnings and ends by doing much the same with the basal material. Children tell how the sentence beginnings in stories they have just read are similar, they point out other sentence beginnings using punctuation and capitalization clues, and they express end punctuation through vocal intonation. Similarly children identify paragraph beginnings in the material they are reading and generalize about paragraphing clues.

Whenever children build sentences from word cards by laying out cards on the composing-stage area of classroom floor, they go back to add the marks that signal sentence beginnings and ends. Punctuation and capitalization markers are on standby, so that children can add markers to the sentences they are constructing. For this purpose, the teacher should *not* capitalize words on cards used for sentence building so that participants can capitalize as part of group sentence building. Big capital letters that are superimposed on the first letter of words indicate the capital form. The same can be done when hanging word cards on a sentence line or setting them up in the chalk trough.

Children should apply their growing understanding of sentence signals to the self-editing process. After children have written short communications, they check whether they have put in the markers signaling sentence beginnings and endings. Because of the relationship between vocal intonation and punctuation, editing at first should be a small



Some Victor Borge recordings are based on this technique. Check your local record shop for a selection.

group oral activity with two youngsters working together first on one person's composition and then on the other's. Such focused self editing is particularly necessary at about second grade when children begin to write more extensively and need to check back on the sentences they are writing.

One caution before going on! Teachers of second and third graders sometimes complain that it is very difficult to teach children to write down sentences in ongoing paragraph form. Some children write sentences in lists. Perhaps the reason is that primary teachers may have recorded experience stories in this way. Even in early recording teachers should beware of that practice. Instead recording sentences in paragraph fashion, leaving considerable space between sentences to show the breaks. Similarly children who are reconstructing a story from individual word cards should be encouraged to lay out the sentences in paragraphs, not in lists.

**Capitalization in Writing** Capitalization can be taught through a wide variety of activities. Here are a few ideas:

- 1 **Capital Word Searches** Children search for words that are not sentence beginners but that start with capital letters. Searchers clip those words and mount them collage fashion on colored construction paper. Later they analyze the words to develop generalizations about the kinds of words writers tend to capitalize. Generalizations become guide charts used in editing and revision. In formulating generalizations based on current writing practice students are functioning as junior linguists.
- 2 **A Class Directory** Middle graders can compile a class directory that includes all their names with addresses and telephone numbers. In so doing they will be working with the capitalization of names, streets, towns, states as well as with the punctuation of addresses. The directory is organized alphabetically so that youngsters will get simultaneous practice with alphabetizing.
- 3 **A Class Calendar** Early primary graders make a large calendar chart for each month as it arrives and place the name of the month at the top, with the days of the week above each column. They indicate important monthly events in the calendar blocks, using capitalization where necessary.
- 4 **Creating Names** Children compose and write out creative names for themselves — capitalized of course. They extend creative naming to renaming local streets, towns, states, geographical features, businesses, and so forth.
- 5 **Books in Circulation** Children can compile running lists of books they have read. These should include title, author, and publisher for each entry with capitalization as needed and with underscoring of titles. Each time a youngster completes a book not previously read by someone else in the class, he/she adds an entry to a class list.
- 6 **Who's Who** Children can cooperatively compile a listing of important people in government including for each entry on the listing the title of distinction such as Governor, Brown, Secretary of State, Hull, Assembly Person, Froude, Ms. Golda Meier. Upper graders

Getting personalized  
help with basic skills



several different occasions. Then young people describe date punctuation usage and record generalizations on a group language generalization chart — How We Write It. As a carry-through at this point, a teacher will need lots of activities that almost force children to include dates in their writing. This would be equally true in learning sequences designed to teach children other written language conventions.

- 1 **Letter Writing** Children write letters to children in other schools asking to exchange samples of materials needed for science or social study: leaf samples, soil samples, water samples, they write letters to pen pals, industries, travel bureaus, governmental agencies. Extensive letter writing activity integrates nicely with study of punctuation of dates and addresses. Student letter writers also will need to know how to punctuate the salutation and complimentary closing of a letter.
- 2 **Engagement Books** Middle graders can reserve a small portion of their Jotting Books to record events they anticipate. These are recorded in sentence format as *On March 15, 1980, our class will go to the Turtle Back Zoo.* Youngsters can make class events flyers by recording similar entries on a duplicating master. Reproduced, the sheet is distributed and sent home to parents who learn of class happenings through the Events Flyer.
- 3 **Everything We Saw** Children from a field trip can enumerate everything they saw on the trip as in "We saw \_\_\_\_\_," "We liked \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_" or "and \_\_\_\_\_." Early primaries can dictate their experience

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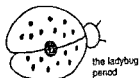
March 15, 1978

Dear Mr. Felt

Sincerely,

summaries, second graders can write out their own experience lists following a model displayed on board or Composing Stage. Even first graders can handle this. "I looked out the window, and I saw \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_."

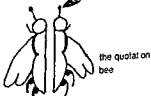
"Then they draw what they saw."



the ladybug period



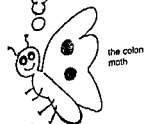
the springing comma tail



the quotation mark bee



the question mark caterpillar



the colon moth



the exclamation mark fly



the semi-colon moth

- 4 **Things We Do** Children enumerate games they play, places they go in the community, activities they carry out in school, and so forth. The result will be series patterns to be punctuated.
- 5 **Pausing and Punctuating** A teacher, printing on a card a sentence like *Susan my sister slipped on a banana peel*, asks children to read it aloud to show meaning vocally and then asks them to read it again to communicate a different meaning. Students add punctuation markers to show on the sentence cards the different meanings expressed through different pause patterns and follow up with oral interpretation of similar sentences. *Ms. Martin my math teacher is sick today, Timothy her friend owns the candy store.* Upper graders in groups will delight in composing confusing sentences that can be interpreted in two ways in the manner of the model sentences. Each group composes some sentences and presents them to the class by pantomiming the two different meanings while a cohort displays their 'punctuation-less' sentences. Listeners must decide how the pantomimed interpretations are to be punctuated, and add markers to two copies of the sentence written out on strips. Sentence strips with commas in place can be mounted on the bulletin board to serve as reference during writing of stories entitled *Jane Doe, the Doctor,* "William Wilkes, the Wild Wolf," and so forth.
- 6 **Playing Yes/No** The pause in speaking and the comma in writing also communicate differences in some yes or no patterns. Children can orally interpret sentences like *No people are allowed there* and *Yes men are eager to get ahead* reading from sentence strips without punctuation. Again children in groups can write their own confusing yes and no sentences stripped of punctuation and share specimens later with the class through pantomime. Classmates add the punctuation that fits the pantomimed meaning.
- 7 **Without the Signals** A teacher gives upper graders paragraphs with all sentence signals removed, those signals include punctuation and capitalization markers as well as the space between words. Children who have just received such stripped down paragraphs try to read them aloud on the spot. Children will see the importance of conventional signals and enjoy adding them to the paragraph puzzles.
- 8 **Checking Back** To encourage young people to edit their own work in terms of punctuation generalizations discovered, one can write out on an overhead transparency some sentences stripped of punctuation. Students together determine where punctuation should have been included in the stripped down sentences.
- 9 **The War of the Insects** Young people meet the Punctuation Bugs depicted in the margin. Upper graders will enjoy writing original stories about *The War of the Insects* in which all the Punctuation Bugs fight for sentence supremacy. Young people can write similarly creative versions describing the origin of the punctuation marks at a point when writing had no periods, commas, quotation

marks, and so forth. Later students can check their concocted explanations against the etymological entry for each punctuation mark in the dictionary.

**Noun and Verb Usage.** After providing children with numerous opportunities to generate sentences in which subjects and verbs agree and in which verbs clearly indicate time relationships, one will want to try for carryover to written expression. This holds true for work with possessive forms of nouns, some forms of pronouns, contractions, and ways to handle negation in different situations. In the following section are specific directions for activities offering practice with nouns and verbs:

1. **Plural Stories.** Begin a list of plural subjects with items like *many frogs, some knights, a king and a queen, five oranges and one pear, thousands of lily pads, two large lakes, high mountains, the sun and the moon*. Ask children to contribute additional plural subjects to the embryonic list by going to a chart during independent work times to add more plural subjects. With children who speak a form of black English, the teacher may have to distinguish between the everyday way of indicating more than one in oral communication and the school way it is done in writing; in black English utterances like *three orange* are acceptable oral usage. Once you have a lengthy listing, convert it into the backdrop of a writing station where children write plural stories; they must use at least three of the noun phrases they have generated as subjects in their stories.
2. **Singular Stories.** Do the same with singular subjects beginning with a list of items like *a red hot sun, the looking glass, the strange-looking man, a wandering minstrel*; children add their contributions to the list and draw from it in writing singular stories.
3. **Playing with Verbs.** Alliterative verb plays can be fun. Provide youngsters with a pattern for oral sentence expansion and time change such as *Everyday Sally sings silly songs*. A player in a group must take the basic sentence given orally and change it to tell a different time message, adding more words with the same beginning sound. Sentences that might be generated in this case are *Yesterday Sally sang seven silly songs. Sally has sung hundreds of stupidly silly songs. Strange Sally will sing silly sassy songs sometime tomorrow*. Other similar beginnings include *Everyday Robert rings rusty bells. Everyday Betsy begins batting balls at dawn. Everyday George goes to Georgia. Everyday Fred falls from fantastic heights*. Do this especially with irregular verbs like *take; swim, drink; bring; do* — wherever children are having difficulty using the conventional forms in class oral expression. Vary the activity in working with speakers of nonstandard dialects, since time is handled differently in some of them.
4. **It Happened Yesterday.** As follow-up to get children writing conventional verb forms, try stories that happened yesterday. When young people are studying the westward expansion, provide learning station titles that center on the period of history encountered, such as "I Was There at Sutter's Creek," "I Went West in a Covered Wagon," "I Helped to Settle California."



- 5 **The Elephant's Trunk** Write sets of four related noun phrases on slips of paper, phrases like *the elephant's trunk, the elephant's trunk, the elephant's trunks, the elephants' trunks*. Make enough slips so that each participant receives a different one. Each must draw a picture to depict the meaning of the phrase, some pictures will be outlandish, as is one showing an elephant with several trunks and the one showing several elephants sharing just one trunk.
- 6 **Finding the Negative Markers** Middle graders search sentences to find words that communicate a negative message. As youngsters find words, they write out on slips of paper the sentences containing them. Paper a bulletin board with the slips and ask children to generalize from their data. How do we say *no* in English? Eventually ask children to search their papered bulletin board for written instances of double negatives such as *I didn't get no noodles*. Ask them to listen for this usage in conversation, noting instances they hear in their Jotting Books with an indication of the situation in which the utterance was made. Help children discover that today this form is employed in very informal conversation and is generally not found in written communication.

7. **Contracting Speech** Contractions are a fine material to teach children about the shortening effect that occurs as language is spoken and about how this changes language. On a good-sized card, letter a pair of words that has a contraction form. On the reverse side, letter the contractual ending so that when the right end of the card is folded over the end of the word, the contraction results.

Ask young people to consider the advantage of word shortenings in conversation. Working from a list that you supply, children make a class set of Shortening Cards with each youngster producing a different contraction. Place the Shortening Cards in a learning station where children go in pairs to quiz one another on the contraction form of a word. Students check answers by folding over the end of the card.

- 8 **Listening for Contractions** Students conduct a listening search for contractions people use in conversation. They jot instances they hear in their Jotting Books, indicating the situation in which the contraction was noted. Allow some talk-time for data sharing. Encourage linguistic sleuths in upper grade classes to listen for other language shortenings not generally reflected in writing such as *gonna* for *going to* and *-in'* for *-ing*.
- 9 **Writing Conversation Tales** Conversations written down often contain contractions. Suggest that students write "Corny Conversations" in which they include at least three of the following sentences:

'I can't,' said the ant  
 "I won't," hooted the owl  
 "I shan't," insisted the elephant  
 "The mouse couldn't," whined the wolf

"I'm a brain," claimed the ape  
 "I'll do it," offered the kangaroo  
 "The asp isn't," hissed the adder  
 "You'll fall," called the fawn

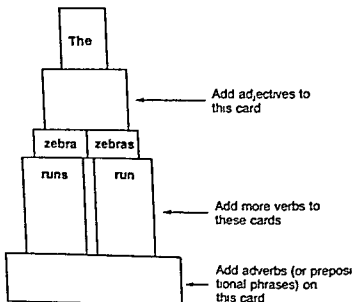


'It's happening,' screamed the  
crow  
'We'll help,' whistled the  
cardinals  
'He'll go,' said the gopher  
'The sheep shouldn't,'  
remarked the ram

"They aren't," chirped the  
bird  
"She'll leap," suggested the  
snail  
"The woodchuck wouldn't,"  
noted the gnome  
"They aren't," bleated the  
lamb

Incidentally this is also a good follow-up activity to use when teaching punctuation of direct quotations

FIGURE 9-1 A  
Sentence Building



Students tape large pieces of colored construction paper together to form a sentence building. Once they have filled in each piece with the appropriate words, they build agreeable sentences by selecting words from their "sentence-buildings." A sentence building constructed in this way helps children see the relationship between noun and verb forms. See chapter 2, pp. 45 for more examples of sentence build-ings.

- 10 *Ain't Not Allowed on Paper* Upper graders conduct an *ain't* search. They keep ears alert for *ain't* as used on tv, in movies, in their own conversation, in school, they keep eyes alert for *ain't* used in books, magazines, papers they are reading. Based on their findings recorded in Jotting Books, young people will be able to generalize about situations in which the contraction *ain't* is not used and when it may be acceptable.
- 11 *Why Is It?* Periodically ask young people to consider why usage in writing tends to be more conservative than usage in speech. Consider the influence of dictionaries, books of usage, and school study on current usage patterns.

**A Warning About the Teaching of Usage Patterns** In involving children in elementary schools with language usage teachers should keep in mind that the objective of study is appropriate usage depending on the communication situation formal writing informal writing not ing formal speaking informal speaking Learning appropriate usage does not come about by memorization of rules It comes about by considerable oral experience with forms of language in different communication situations and parallels experiences in writing that call forth those forms being encountered orally Therefore teachers must take care that the verbalization of generalizations does not become the focus of language usage activity Verbalizing generalizations should simply be a means of summarizing what is becoming second nature to the child and of describing the way the language is used Based on this conception teachers should avoid assignments such as Memorize the seven usages of the comma and tests that ask children to repeat those usages Language work at this level wastes valuable time better spent in listening to speaking reading and writing a variety of English patterns

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- If you are using a basal reader summarize a short reading selection on sentence strips Cut the strips into noun and verb phrase units Now in a talking together session involve children in the reconstruction of the story by laying out the strips on the composing stage area of your classroom floor Invite participants to reset necessary punctuation
- Make yourself a set of punctuation blocks from cubes of wood styrofoam or thick cardboard For most sentenc ing activity with upper graders you will need at least a dozen periods and commas a half dozen apostrophes six sets of quotation marks several question marks and a few exclamation points With sixth graders you will need some semicolon and colon blocks as well as blocks containing hyphens and dashes
- Search your library collection for a story or a portion of a story that you could use as a stepping stone to teach some aspect of usage as was done in the example of teaching children to compose appositives based on McDermott's *The Stonecutter* (see pp 335-36)

### Learning about Grammar

Not only is there much emphasis in language arts programs and texts on appropriate usage patterns but also there is some emphasis today on introducing young people to ways of describing the operation of their language—how English works to communicate clear messages A grammar describes the syntax of a particular language more explicitly it tells

about the patterns of sentence and phrase formation from words in the language

**Describing the Language.** For many years most English grammar was prescriptive rather than descriptive. Early language investigators studied Latin grammar and prescribed how English should be used based on the Latin model. In the 1700s when a formalized English grammar began to emerge, Latin was considered an exceptional language, verging on perfection. It became the source of precise rules set out by the language scholars of the eighteenth century—rules that served as the content of school grammar until recent times.

The problems with this approach to school grammar study are two-fold. First, in many respects, Latin grammar is a poor model for English grammar. Latin is a highly inflectional language. This means that word endings are significant in communicating meaning. In contrast, English depends more on word order and function words than on inflectional endings to communicate meaning. Order of words in sentences—not inflectional endings—allows a listener to distinguish differences in meaning between *The man killed the tiger* and *The tiger killed the man*.

Second, precise rules devised in the 1700s to describe the language can hardly describe the English of today. Modern linguists accept the fact that language is continually changing. It changes in vocabulary as new words appear, old words acquire new meanings, and words drop from everyday usage. It changes too in syntax, the patterns in which speakers put words together and through which they express meanings. An English grammar must reflect these changes. Traditional Latin-based grammar does not.

**Historical Linguistics** Late in the nineteenth century, there was some action on the grammar front. A new breed of linguist emerged no longer dedicated to the proposition that the Latin model adequately described English grammar and that the job of the linguist was to prescribe *dos* and *don'ts*. These were the historical linguists who began to study the early origins of the English language. They identified English as belonging to the Indo-European language family and recognized it as a Germanic language more closely akin to Dutch, Flemish, German, Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish than to Latin and the Romance languages. Linguists based their discoveries about English language origins and changes on a comparative study of the vocabulary, syntactic structures, sounds, and spellings of the various languages. In this respect the historical linguists became comparative linguists, studying the relation among languages to discover similarities and differences, and to identify words borrowed from other languages as well as changes that took place in the process.

**Structural Linguistics** The historical and comparative linguists by relying on analytical techniques were paving the way for the structural linguists of the twentieth century. Using systematic analysis, these linguists have been able to explain the structures through which speakers communicate meaning in English. They have described how meaning is communicated through

- 1 intonation—pitch, stress, juncture, or pause,
- 2 sentence patterns—the order of words in sentences,
- 3 function words—words like noun markers, verb markers phrase markers, clause markers question markers that communicate relationships among the four major word classes, the nouns verbs, adjectives, and adverbs,
- 4 inflectional endings like the *s* through which we form a plural noun and affixes through which we change words from one class to another. For example, *govern* a verb, becomes *government* a noun, with the addition of the affix *ment* while *courage*, a noun, becomes *courageous* an adjective, with the addition of the affix *-ous*

To present a grammar based on a description of English language structures, the structuralists found it necessary to devise a vocabulary for talking about the language. Today instead of talking about just eight parts of speech, linguists talk about four major word classes or forms: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs and about function words like prepositions, determiners, pronouns or noun substitutes auxiliaries, intensifiers, and conjunctions. Today too linguists approach the definitions of parts of speech from a different direction. No longer is a noun defined simply as the name of a person, place, or thing. The structural linguist prefers to talk about syntactic clues that help distinguish among words as those words work or pattern in sentences—syntactic clues such as 1 affixes and inflections associated with a particular part of speech 2 function words that pattern with a particular part of speech, and most important 3 the characteristic positions in a sentence occupied by a part of speech.

Young children learn to interpret meanings signaled through affixes, function words, and word order as they learn to speak the language. In this respect, although youngsters coming to school do not know the vocabulary used to describe their language—do not know how to label and talk about nouns, verbs, and so forth—children are able to make words work in sentence patterns characteristic of the language. From this point of view, youngsters have a relatively good command of the grammar of their language.

Linguistic research reveals that this is equally true of children who come to school speaking a nonstandard dialect of English: black English, Cajun, Appalachian, for instance. These children have a command of the grammar of their dialect; they know how to make words operate consistently in the sentence patterns of their nonstandard dialect.

**Transformational or Generative Grammar** More recently language study has assumed another orientation. Oftentimes utilizing some of the new terminology of the structuralists as well as their analytical approach, transformational grammarians have attempted to uncover the deep structure of the language, intuitive knowledge of which makes it possible for speakers to generate sentences never before created. The classic example to show the difference between deep and surface structure is two sentences that on quick examination appear similar:

*John is easy to please*

*John is eager to please*

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As Noam Chomsky (1957) has pointed out, these sentences are far from similar. In the first, someone else is pleasing John. In the second, John is the pleaser. Furthermore, a different underlying structure is indicated by the fact that the first can be transformed into a completely sensible English sentence *It is easy to please John*. The same operation performed on the second sentence results in *It is eager to please John*, an ungrammatical expression.

In describing the way speakers use language to generate sentences, the transformational grammarians have provided numbers of basic, or kernel sentence patterns that are a bit more complicated than the patterns supplied by the structuralists. They have described the ways in which speakers expand the basic patterns and transform them into questions, negative statements, and commands. They have explained how people insert or imbed one sentence into another to produce more complex sentences.

*Linguistics in the Classroom* Unquestionably, the work of the modern day linguists is carrying educators closer to an accurate description of how the English language works and how people generate sentences they have never heard before. Their work is placing educators long strides away from the strictly prescriptive approach that characterized much language study in classrooms in the past. Unquestionably too the linguists are supplying simple analytical approaches and clearer definitions based on syntax with which young people can begin to understand the workings of their language. In some instances, however, it appears that teachers are taking the work of the linguists and turning it into new content to be memorized. Students in some classrooms are memorizing the new parts of speech, the formulas for sentence generation, expansion and transformation, and the steps in the historical development of our language. Where this is happening, the work of the linguists is being subverted.

Second, in some language programs, youngsters in upper elementary grades are being asked to write out involved sentence equations as well as to construct intricate language tree diagrams based on the linguists' conceptualizations. These techniques are advanced tools of the language scholar that contribute little to elementary language understanding and make language investigation tedious for the beginner. The same can be said of some terminology devised by scholars to talk about the intricacies of language structure. Too much terminology too quickly encountered frustrates even the brightest child, who may resort to memorization to conquer it.

What aspects of linguistics should be taught and learned in schools? To answer this question, the reader must consider why children are involved in language study in the first place. Most research indicates that knowing about nouns, verbs, and so forth makes little difference in one's ability to speak, read, write, or listen. No, schools do not involve children in grammar study to help them achieve greater language facility. Rather such study is designed to provide young people with a vocabulary to use when talking about their language, to help children intellectually understand and appreciate the way their language communicates.

meanings and to help children gain elemental skill in analyzing as language scholars do. Just as in science class a major goal is to have children learn the methods through which scientists discover new knowledge, so in language study the goal is to have children learn the ways of language investigation. This learning is part of general education.

From this point of view, the aspects of language taught should be those that contribute to general understanding of the structure and development of English and of the methods of linguistic study. Educators can draw content from the work of the historians, the structuralists, and the transformationalists, as well as from the work on dialects, selecting only aspects that lend most easily to firsthand involvement with language — especially oral language — and to direct investigation through discovery approaches. Teachers can limit linguistic vocabulary to terms essential in communicating about language at an elementary level: names of parts of speech and words describing basic sentence components such as noun and verb phrase.

Unfortunately, language study in the past has been generally unpopular with students. Teachers have not been successful in making language study a fascinating, come-alive experience. In the next section are descriptions of some concepts about language and ideas for making language study something that children will anticipate.

**New Ways to Look at the Sentence** Language specialists today speak of the grammaticalness of English sentences. A grammatically valid sentence is one that abides by all the rules for sentence making that speakers have come to know intuitively. Listeners recognize *The farmer planted the seeds in the garden* as a grammatically valid sentence just as they recognize *The flurp is dooping clops in the loodle lop* as a sentence consistent with rules of English sentence building, even though the class or form words are nonsense. The function words — the two determiners, the auxiliary, the preposition — and the inflectional endings like the *-ing* still signal relationships within the sentence. In contrast, listeners eliminate groups of words like *Sing over by girls fly the and the now brook mountain* as a sentence. Such groupings do not act as people have come to expect sentences to act. They are non-sentences.

To help children conceptualize about sentences and non-sentences, many present-day linguists suggest that schools begin with what the transformational grammars call the kernel sentence: a sentence that adheres to a basic NP + VP pattern with a noun phrase followed by a verb phrase. Young children developing a conception of what a sentence is generate numerous sentences starting with ones in which the NP is comprised only of a determiner and a noun and the VP is comprised of only a verb and an adverb. A model for sentence building would be *The girl sleeps soundly*. Refer back to pages 317–18 for a more complete listing of NP and VP patterns for sentence building. Much of this work, as was suggested previously, should be carried out orally with children cooperatively building sentences that fit the given patterns. Chapter 8 also gives ideas for involving children in sentence expansions and transformations, other ways to refine children's growing conception of a sentence.

Here are five additional sentencing activities for use especially with children in grade three and up

- 1 **'Draw' a Sentence** Children pull seven word cards from a pouchful containing many samples of all the class and function words. That means there should be lots of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, as well as prepositions, pronouns, intensifiers, conjunctions, determiners, and auxiliaries in the pouch. Players try to build sentences with the cards drawn, in the process including as many as possible of the words chosen at random. Youngsters play Draw a Sentence as a team game in which a member from each team simultaneously draws seven cards and attempts to build a sentence with as many of them as he/she can within a short, predetermined time. A Board of Examiners judges the grammaticalness of the productions. Each team receives a number of points equivalent to the number of words included in the sentence. If it is judged ungrammatical, the Board of Examiners explains the problem and awards no points.

- 2 **Add a Word** Older children study paragraphs from which most class words have been deleted.

The \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ to  
 the \_\_\_\_\_ At the \_\_\_\_\_ by  
 the \_\_\_\_\_, they \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ " \_\_\_\_\_"  
 \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ Then the \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_

The End

They then pull words from a pouch full of adjective, adverb, noun, and verb cards, and try to fit the cards picked randomly into the blanks of the sentence. The results may be nonsense but must be grammatically sound.

- 3 **Connect the Pieces** The teacher orally delivers a paragraph from any book, eliminating all function words and asking children to diagnose the paragraph's problem. Then slowly he/she rereads the sentences still stripped of function words while children volunteer additional words to make the sentences grammatical.
- 4 **'Jabberwocky'** Children listen to Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky' as it is read expressively to them. Then they substitute real English words for the nonsense ones to see if they can produce a piece that makes real sense. This they do first as an oral class composition exercise and later as a writing station activity with young people writing other original and sensible versions independently.
- 5 **A Sentence Maker** A teacher gathers together numerous word cards labeled with specific nouns, noun markers, verbs, verb markers, adjectives, and adverbs and makes available in the sentence-making center a box of punctuation blocks he/she has created. Children go to the sentence-making center to generate original sentences from the cards.

A sentence-making center can be based on word cubes rather than cards. For purposes of mathematics study, one can purchase small white cubes on which one can print words, restricting the words on the faces of any cube to all adjectives, all nouns, and so forth. Young



sters toss the cubes and must construct sentences from the words that land face up

**New Ways to Look at Parts of Speech** The structural linguist's conception of parts of speech has been moving into elementary language programs. Because of this change, those who have just begun to teach and who have learned a Latin-based grammar will find it necessary to develop new concepts about language. Similarly, those who learned Latin-based grammar by the old memorize-a-list-of-prepositions-underline-the-noun-and-circle-the-verb-and-identify-by-putting-the-correct-abbreviations-for-parts-of-speech-above-each-word-techniques will need to reconsider instructional procedures. Such techniques do little to instill excitement about language relationships and do not engage children in the method of thinking and investigating through which the linguists make language discoveries.

**Characteristics of Parts of Speech** Below is a summary of characteristics of each part of speech that children in elementary schools today are discovering and that are presented in most language arts texts. One may find slight variations in terminology and categories in the text in use in a school district. To prevent confusion, one should adhere to the divisions and terms set forth in the school's language curriculum, which will probably conform to the text series in use.

## The Four Major Classes of Words

### 1. The Noun

- Nouns have a plural form, generally achieved through addition of *-s* or *-es* and sometimes through internal changes in the base word as in *woman* to *women* and *child* to *children*.
- Nouns have a possessive form generally achieved through addition of *'s* and sometimes of just *s*.
- Noun affixes include *-ness*, *-ment*, *-age*, *-hood*, *-er*, *-ence*, *-ance*, *-ity*, *-tion*.
- Nouns can be signalled by a determiner as in *a girl*, *those apes*, *my gift*, *five robins*.
- Nouns can pattern with prepositions and can have their place taken by pronouns.
- Nouns pattern in certain ways as shown in the following test frames in which each blank represents a possible noun slot.

The \_\_\_\_\_ ran into the \_\_\_\_\_  
Some \_\_\_\_\_ bought a/an \_\_\_\_\_ at the \_\_\_\_\_

I sent the \_\_\_\_\_ some \_\_\_\_\_  
She is the \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. The Verb

- A verb form changes to indicate time relationships.
- A verb form changes to agree in number with its subject noun.
- Verb affixes include *-ate*, *-ize*, *-ify*, *-en* as well as prefixes like *be-*, *dis-*, *re-*, and *en-*.
- Verbs may pattern with auxiliaries, in which case it is the auxiliary that changes form to show time or number relationships.

- Verbs pattern as shown in the following test frames in which each blank represents a possible verb slot

The horse should \_\_\_\_\_ Should the horse  
\_\_\_\_\_?  
The boy \_\_\_\_\_ the dog  
The girl \_\_\_\_\_ my friend The story  
\_\_\_\_\_ long  
The farm \_\_\_\_\_ in Nebraska

- Verbs have an *-ing* form
- 3 The Adjective
- Adjectives pattern with intensifiers as in *very happy, terribly sick, too damp, most pleased*
  - Adjectives have two favorite positions as shown by the following test frame in which each blank represents a possible adjective slot

The \_\_\_\_\_ car seems very \_\_\_\_\_

- Most adjectives have a comparative and a superlative form achieved by addition of *-er* and *-est* or by placement of the words *more* or *most* before long adjectives as in *more wonderful, most brilliant*
- Adjective affixes include *-ful, -less, -able, -ive, -y, -ous, -en*

#### 4 The Adverb

- Adverbs pattern with intensifiers as in *very slowly*
- Adverbs tend to be movable and, therefore, can be found in many spots in a sentence, they are best recognized in the terminal position shown in the test frame

The man ran \_\_\_\_\_ The baby cried \_\_\_\_\_

- Adjective affixes include *-ful, -less, -able, -ive, -y, -ous, -en*
- Some adverbs have a comparative and superlative form achieved by addition of the words *more* or *most* before the adverb as in *more rapidly, most assuredly*

### The Function Words

#### 1 The Determiner or Noun Marker

- Determiners are found in noun phrases and signal that a noun is coming
- The determiner position is before the noun as in the following test frames

\_\_\_\_\_ man won \_\_\_\_\_ race  
\_\_\_\_\_ horses pull \_\_\_\_\_ logs

- There are different kinds of determiners as shown by this sampling of words that can function as determiners *a, an, the, his, your, one, eighteen, this, these, that, many, some, all*

#### 2 The Preposition or Phrase Marker

- Prepositions always pattern in phrases with nouns as shown in the following test frames for prepositions

The cat crawled \_\_\_\_\_ the tree  
The house \_\_\_\_\_ the corner is red  
The bell rang \_\_\_\_\_ noon

### 3 The Pronoun

- Pronouns substitute for nouns in a special way they give us information about sex number and definiteness
- Pronouns change form depending on their function in the sentence
- Pronouns can serve as a Noun Phrase in a sentence and can be found in any of the characteristic positions occupied by Noun Phrases

### 4 The Auxiliary or the Verb Marker

- Auxiliaries pattern with verbs and signal a verb is coming
- Auxiliaries change form to show changes in tense and in number

### 5 The Intensifier

- Intensifiers pattern with adjectives and adverbs
- The word *very* functions as an intensifier Therefore a test for an intensifier is to substitute other words in the *very* slot in the sentence *The girl is very sad*

### 6 The Coordinating Conjunction

- Coordinating conjunctions are used to connect two sentences assisted generally by commas when the sentences are long Words that may function as coordinators include *and but yet, nor, or, so for* (Note these words may have other functions in a sentence)
- Coordinating conjunctions are used to connect sentence parts of equal weight The result may be a compound subject a compound predicate, a compound adjective a compound prepositional phrase, and so forth

### 7 The Subordinating Conjunction

- Subordinating conjunctions are used to insert one sentence into another Words that can function as subordinators include *although, after, since when, because, in the slot* \_\_\_\_\_ *he came I was happy and who, that in The one* \_\_\_\_\_ *came in first was the winner Use of these structures helps clarify relationships among sentence ideas by indicating time cause, purpose and so forth*

*Ways of Involving Children in Parts of Speech* In the past much language study has been a solitary affair with children completing worksheets and textbook exercises after a brief explanation by the teacher Today as linguists emphasize the primacy of oral language educators need to think long and searchingly about the grammar related exercises employed in the past that do not involve children directly with the oral language Many teachers are finding that language study is one of the best times to engage children in thinking listening and talking together Children can actively and orally generate language specimens cooperatively analyze the samples they have provided and gradually build an understanding and appreciation of their language

An easy introduction to new ways of looking at the parts of speech is to structure sentence generating activities around the test frames that linguists have devised to show how particular parts of speech pattern in sentences To her second grade class Phyllis Bartkus intro

duces nounness by displaying three word cards and a period card in the chalk trough so that they look like this

The

had

a

.



Red words: girl, fox, tail  
a's: teacher, cart, horse  
ch, den, and bicycle  
Yellow words: strong, tall  
f, endy, la, ga, long  
wonderful, tiny, terrible  
beautiful



Word to use: ran, rowy  
I, or, ad, a, ound, came  
the, n, ga, and, he, e, a, n  
them, sood, by, va, ed  
or, jumped, away  
leard, d, m, m, d, a, n, y

To the children she distributes individual word cards some bearing words that can function as nouns others bearing possible adjective words. Children volunteer their words for placement in the empty sentence slots to build sentences. At first the sentence building rule is only one word to a slot and some children find that their words do not work in the sentence slots. Shortly the rule changes and two words now can be placed in a slot. Youngsters who previously found that their words could not work alone find they are now able to place them. They discover that their place is just before the word cards previously placed in the sentence slots and just after *The* and *a*. Taking a hint from Carl Lefevre (1970) Ms Bartkus color codes her word cards — words that can function in this test frame as nouns are in red, adjectives in yellow. Over and over again the children juggle their words but find that no matter which specific words they choose for the first and second positions in a slot the yellow cards precede the red ones. Since this is a beginning for Ms Bartkus's second graders she does not introduce terminology like noun or adjective. This will come later after children have built nouns and adjectives into a number of test frames. At that point she will begin to call one group of words *nouns* the other *adjectives* and children will describe how nouns and adjectives pattern in sentences.

Phyllis Bartkus's approach can serve as a model for lessons with other parts of speech. For instance, youngsters who are learning about verbs can work with a sentence frame such as *The man \_\_\_\_\_*. From adverb and verb word cards distributed to them, children select those that fit into the slot to form a sentence. They later generate their own words that can function in the slot and they go on to introduce their adverb cards into their sentences, trying the adverbs in many sentence locations. They will quickly see the distinctive quality of adverbs — that adverbs do not have a favorite spot in the sentence but are movable.

For follow up youngsters can play with sentence ladders. Each is simply a test frame for a part of speech or a phrase. On the next page are two: one that stresses nouns, the other that stresses prepositional phrases. Orally children generate a multitude of words to attach to steps on the sentence ladders. Then they read versions of the sentence choosing from items on their ladders.

These lesson models suggest that in introducing parts of speech teachers handle related parts in close proximity. Determiners, which signal that nouns are coming, are handled in association with nouns. This would be equally true of prepositions and pronouns, which relate as well to nouns. Teaching determiners, for example, one might focus on a noun phrase such as *The shoes* in the sentence *The shoes are on the table*. Children substitute quickly and orally many words for the noun

### A Noun Ladder

|      |        |       |      |    |          |
|------|--------|-------|------|----|----------|
| That | wicked | which | sole | my | ing      |
|      |        | man   |      |    | orange   |
|      |        | mouse |      |    | cheese   |
|      |        | cow   |      |    | milk     |
|      |        | wolf  |      |    | umbrella |
|      |        |       |      |    |          |
|      |        |       |      |    |          |

### A Prepositional Phrase Ladder

|                           |        |           |
|---------------------------|--------|-----------|
| The fat yellow fish swims | around | the pond  |
|                           | in     | the brook |
|                           | by     | the boat  |
|                           | across | the river |

*shoes* and then many words for the word *The*, perhaps making lengthy sentence ladders such as those on the next page

Older children, beginning to develop their linguistic vocabularies, label the column beginning *The*, "Determiner", they label the column beginning *shoes*, "Noun". Later children mix and match determiners and nouns to form additional sentences. Eventually, to gain heightened understanding of their language, they generalize about the favored-ite determiner noun order and interject an adjective ladder between the determiner and the noun, talking about relationships among these three associated parts of speech. Again most of this work is oral as children add slips to lengthen the ladders and call out resulting sentences. In like fashion, auxiliaries are studied in association with verbs, intensifiers with adjectives and adverbs.

**Games and Parts of Speech.** Game like activities are an aid to concept formation. Teachers can create games to show children how the addition of affixes changes the functioning of words in sentences. For example, youngsters in one third grade class see through game-play how the addition of *-ness* to some adjectives results in words that can pattern as nouns or how the addition of *-tion* to some verbs results in

|            |                        |
|------------|------------------------|
| Determiner | Noun                   |
| The        | shoes are on the table |
| Some       | papers                 |
| Many       | d'shes                 |
| Five       | boxes                  |
| My         | glasses                |
| These      | pencils                |
| It's       | feet                   |

words that can function as nouns. For the first game, the teacher provides a die and a stack of cards encribed with adjectives that can form a new word with the addition of *-ness* *happy, windy, careful, unpleasant, forceful, great, white, tall, thoughtful, gentle, sweet, willing, cloudy, soft*. For a second game this teacher provides a die and a stack of cards imprinted with verbs that can form nouns with the addition of *-sion* or *-tion* *add, subtract, relate, graduate, dedicate, locate, decorate, populate, permit, express, inform, indicate, object, collect, promote, act, narrate*. Three children play a game by taking turns tossing the die to determine how many spaces to move along a game-board track, drawing a card from the word deck, and performing on that word the operation indicated on the square on which they have landed for example, making the word into its *-ness* or *-tion* form and using it in a sentence, using the original word in a negative, interrogative, or exclamatory sentence, using the original word as a verb or an adjective in a declarative sentence. A task correctly completed nets the player the points indicated on the square. To facilitate game play, one youngster must serve as judge.

A teacher can make variations of this game by supplying a stack of

- possible verb cards that can be converted into nouns with addition of *-er, -ee, or -ance*, which appears on the game board track
- possible noun cards to be converted to adjectives with addition of *-ous, -less, -y*. The suffix is added to the game board track
- possible adjective cards that can be converted into nouns with the assistance of *-ity*
- declarative sentence cards to be converted into questions with the assistance of *where, why, how* and so forth in this case question markers such as *where* appear on the playing board
- nouns to be made singular possessive plural and plural possessive, in this case imprint *Sing Poss Pl Pl Poss* on the board

Note that games such as the one described above can include not just one relationship to be practiced but several including kernel sentence transformations. Once children have played teacher devised games to reinforce specific understandings they invent original games of their own. These games once devised can be set up along the classroom perimeter for a Carnival of Language Games in which groups of children play language games under the direction of the young people who have concocted them. Each group stays at one game booth for ten minutes and then moves to a second. A class can share its Carnival with other classes who are studying the same aspects of language in leading a game students will be participating in an enjoyable oral language experience.

Game play is gaining in popularity as a technique for creative reinforcement of language understanding for in it students are applying their expanding understanding of language relationships to particular words and/or sentence problems. Educational games are sold commercially at a much higher cost than that for which students can produce similar ones focusing more directly on specific aspects of grammar and usage being studied.

**Structured Writing** Once children have some notion of the major parts of speech their growing conceptions can be used as the base for both patterned writing of sentences and of lengthier selections as well as the base for more expressive writing. For example children can write chain sentences by folding back narrow strips of paper and writing down in succession words that can function as the parts of speech announced. The teacher starts by announcing Determiner. Every child writes a possible determiner on the top of his/her paper strip folds it back and passes the paper to an adjacent participant. The teacher calls Adjective next children respond by writing at the new top a possible adjective word — without looking at the preceding determiner. Again the paper is folded back and passed to someone else as the teacher calls Singular Noun then Verb and so forth. The result should be grammatically sound sentences though doubtlessly a bit nonsensical. The pieces can be shared aloud with students talking about why the sentences still sound like sentences. Much the same can be done by calling successive parts of speech in a sentence pattern and having teams cooperatively build sentences on the chalkboard that conform to the directions.

A more involved kind of activity is patterned writing. One of the best examples was shared by a second grade teacher Eileen Hoernlein who discovered the poem Beans Beans Beans by Lucile and James Hymes in Bill Martin's *Sounds of Mystery*. Ms. Hoernlein orally shared the poem with the second graders who had had considerable previous experience with nouns and adjectives so her follow up was a real challenge to them write a poem using adjectives and nouns rather like the Hymeses have done.

Beans  
Beans  
Beans

A Word Game Board

Start here

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| ?     | 1 |
| -ness | 3 |
| !     | 2 |
| adj   | 2 |
| ness  | 1 |
|       | 3 |
| ?     | 3 |
| adj   | 2 |
| -ness | 2 |
| ?     | 1 |
| ad    | 3 |
| !     | 1 |
| -ness | 3 |
| ?     | 2 |
| adj   | 1 |
| -ness | 4 |

End here

Baked beans  
 Butter beans  
 Big fat lima beans  
 Long thin string beans —  
 Those are just a few  
 Green beans  
 Black beans  
 Big fat kidney beans  
 Red hot chilly beans  
 jumping beans too  
 Pea beans  
 Pinto beans  
 Don't forget shell, beans  
 Last of all bes' of all  
 I like jell, beans

To help the youngsters along Eileen outlined the pattern for writing as shown below

    noun      
    noun      
    noun      
            noun  
            noun  
                            noun  
                            noun

Those are just a few

            noun  
            noun  
                            noun  
                            noun  
            noun too  
            noun  
            noun

Don't forget             noun

Last of all bes' of all

I like             noun



Each youngster then selected one noun word and went on to describe that object in the manner of 'Beans Beans, Beans If children found they wanted to use words other than adjectives to make their pieces sound better and communicate a clearer message, this was encouraged. In other words, the pattern was applied loosely. Here are some of Lilien Hoernlein's results

Pickles,  
Pickles,  
Pickles  
Fat pickles,  
Skinny pickles,  
Little, sour, juicy pickles —  
Those are just a few  
Dill pickles,  
Hamburger pickles,  
Sandwich and lunch pickles,  
All by-themselves pickles  
Whopper pickles too  
Salad pickles,  
Tuna fish pickles,  
Don't forget spiced pickles  
Last of all, best of all,  
I like sliced pickles  
Rodney Keys

Bugs,  
Bugs  
Bugs  
Bad bugs,  
Spider bugs  
Daddy long leg bugs  
Dead, smushed up bugs —  
Those are just a few  
Cockroach bugs,  
Green bugs  
Brown, yellow black bugs  
Lightening bugs too  
Don't forget ant bugs  
Last of all, best of all  
I like ladybugs!  
Michael Robinson

The diamante provides a similar pattern for writing, based also on parts of speech. The diamante, according to the pattern established by Iris Tiedt, is comprised of seven lines

Noun I  
Adjective Adjective  
Participle Participle Participle  
Noun Noun Noun, Noun  
Participle, Participle Participle  
Adjective Adjective  
Noun II

As made clear in the following samples the diamante is a study in contrasts since NOUN II must represent an opposite of NOUN I and since the adjectives, participles and nouns in the first half refer to NOUN I while the words in the second half refer to NOUN II

king  
Rich Powerful  
Demanding Commanding Ruling  
Leader Royalty Low Peasant  
Working Obeying Despairing  
Poor Powerless  
Slave  
Joseph Bores

Rain  
Damp, moist  
Splashing, beating, pouncing  
Crystal, cloud, yellowness, blueness  
Gleaming, shining, glazing  
Warm, bright  
Sun

Donna Vreeland



An expanded puff  
composed by Ca o  
O Ha e s second grade  
Snow —  
Sparkling cold soft  
Bowling taking me  
on the rooftops  
Nature's ice cream

A truncated diamante centering on just one object works equally well, especially with younger children. Such a form, which is called a "Puff" because it is so short, can introduce youngsters at the same time to metaphor, for in putting together a last line, youngsters must dream up a creative comparison to describe the object being played with.

Noun —  
Adjective, Adjective, Adjective,  
Participle, Participle, Participle  
Creative Comparison

Icicle —  
Cold, hard, glassy,  
Shining, dripping, breaking  
Winter's sword

Older students who have experimented with writing patterns determined by parts of speech can establish original patterns also based on speech parts. Responding to this invitation, one upper grade group devised the following pattern and cooperatively composed the accompanying piece.

|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Noun, Noun, Noun      | Cups, saucers, plates |
| Verb,                 | Drop,                 |
| Verb, and             | Clatter, and          |
| Verb                  | Break                 |
| Prepositional phrase, | Into a million pieces |
| Prepositional phrase, | On the floor          |
| Prepositional phrase  | In our kitchen        |
| Exclamation word!     | Help!                 |

The same group later created

|                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Adjective Noun,              | Ghostly goblins              |
| Adjective Noun,              | Wicked witches               |
| Adjective Noun               | Galloping ghosts             |
| Verb Adverb,                 | Zoom about                   |
| Verb Adverb,                 | Flit around                  |
| Verb Adverb,                 | Hover here                   |
| Verb Adverb                  | Rest there                   |
| What do you think of Noun,   | What do you think of goblins |
| Noun, and Noun Prepositional | witches and ghosts on        |
| phrase?                      | Halloween?                   |

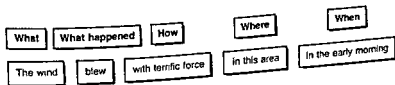
The influence of working with the 'Beans, Beans Beans' pattern is clearly apparent in the structured writing of this group

**Focused Writing** Less structured writing can focus to some extent on specific parts of speech. Children who have been encountering adjectives can write stories that include really expressive adjectives. Paragraphs of description in which youngsters tell about some unusual person they have met are good for this purpose. Before children begin to write, they brainstorm specific describing words to use in talking about height, weight, hair, dress, overall body build, facial expression, look-of-the-eye and eye color, as well as personality qualities. Borrowing a page from Lorraine Cliff's sixth grade plan book, one can call these 'People Words'.

Another teacher encourages the use of expressive adjectives by giving youngsters pictures of objects and by placing strong adjectives on the reverse side. She stacks her picture collection in a writing station. There the young people go to 'Pick a Picture and use the given words' as adjectives in paragraphs of description. Later during talk-time, children orally share their paragraphs while listeners try to match written descriptions with the pictures on display. Listeners identify too the adjectives that provide the clearest clues.

A third teacher tries for use of expressive adjectives by first engaging children in an adjective hunt. Libby Thall has each of her sixth graders identify one well-known personality, Robert Redford, Elton John, Cher, Peggy Fleming, the President, and newspapers, children's personalities. Searching through magazines and newspapers, children clip adjectives that could describe the person, using a test frame such as *The \_\_\_\_\_ Robert Redford* as a guide. If they find words that have appropriate meaning but cannot function as adjectives in a present form, students 'doctor' them, converting a word like *beauty* to *beautiful*, *stun* to *stunning* with the aid of a flippen. Searchers make collages from their clipped words and then draw from the collages words to write into strikingly descriptive paragraphs about the chosen personality.

Work with prepositional phrases and adverbs can lead to writing that supplies considerable detail. Beginning with a base sentence such as this one:



youngsters generate similar sentences that tell how, where, and when. To facilitate construction of sentences, they make labeling cards HOW, WHERE, WHEN, and stick the cards with masking tape to the chalkboard. Active children in groups generate additional sentences they can write those on word strips and stick the strips beneath the



Words uncovered by Ms. Cliff's sixth graders include: open, absent, minded, close, minded, outgoing, unmerciful, opinionated, obnoxious, snobbish, grumpy, gutsy, effusive, bigoted, fence-sitting, nature-loving, scientific, klutzy, pesky, pessimistic, optimist, independent, soft-hearted, hard-hearted, logical, big-mouthed, extroverted, prejudiced, pig-headed, boning-out-of-it, clever, talkative, and outspoken.

appropriate label. In this way, students can later return to look at the kinds of words and structures that tend to give how, where, and when information, and to shift these informational units around in the sentence. Once children have played together with the how/when/where concept, they write paragraphs in which they include these essentials. In so doing, writers by necessity will draw upon adverbial constructions as well as prepositional phrases. In editing and revising, they can shift around their own adverbs and prepositional phrases to achieve a desired impact.

Children writing about exciting events witnessed will need powerful verbs to enhance their communication. A teacher can introduce the notion of powerful verbs by group talk about an event witnessed together. Children tell 'what happened' as a scribe records verbs on word cards. Later they return to each card and think of other verbs to be added to the card to communicate a fuller picture. For example, to a *ran* card children may contribute *hustled, bolted, streaked, sped*, to a *looked* card children may contribute *stared, glared, peeked*. In some instances they may wish to add adverbs as well: *ran wildly, looked longingly*. Later the scribe gathers all the cards in a Wild Events Writing Station, where children select words from the cards to write into descriptions of exciting happenings that they have witnessed first hand or on tv.

**Some Specific Ideas** Here are a few specific ideas to trigger thinking about ways to handle parts of speech so that oral interaction is part of the learning sequence.

1. **Spin the Wheel of Speech** Youngsters cut two medium sized circles from stiff paper. Across the diameter of one, they write a test frame for a part of speech, for example, for adverb: *The hidden owl hooted*. At the spot in the circle marked by the adverbial blank, they cut a window. Now they attach the two circles with the test frame circle on top of the other, held there at the hub by a paper fastener. Children rotate the bottom circle and write through the window onto the lower card words that fit the test frame. This activity can serve as the content for a learning station to which children go in pairs to construct wheels of speech.
2. **Word Unit Mobiles** Children construct word mobiles from heavy wooden hangers equipped with a crossbar across which they hang a variety of verb cards. To each card they tie with yarn other cards containing adverbs that can pattern with the hanging verbs. Or they tie on cards containing prepositional phrases that could be used immediately after the verbs. On other occasions children can start with hanging adjective cards to which they attach hanging nouns. Later they can even add verbs to their hanging adjective-noun sequences. The pattern of the hanging word units changes as children's understanding of parts of speech becomes more sophisticated.
3. **Adjective Grids** Working from an idea presented by Fred Brengelman (1970), Virginia Shedd has devised a charting activity through which upper graders begin to see the appropriate pairing of adjectives with nouns. Children brainstorm a list of objects which Ms

Large words from Webster's  
Cabel Gree et al. In  
Other Words (Ginn  
IL Scott Foresman 1969)  
out of which students can  
make a similar chart. big  
huge extensive gigantic  
vast mammoth immense  
bulky enormous massive  
tremendous  
Let a words for a second  
chart small slight tiny  
trivial minute petty  
moderate brief puny  
short

Shedd plots downward on a chart. Then children identify synonyms for *fat* which Ms Shedd plots across the top of her grid. Together children and teacher pair adjectives and nouns placing a check in every square that represents a congenial coupling. Ms Shedd uses this activity not only to reinforce understanding of adjective noun relationships but also to assist young people in understanding the fine distinctions in meaning among synonyms.

Virginia Shedd's Synonym Chart

|         | Fat | Broad | Wide | Obese | Pump | Big | Thick |
|---------|-----|-------|------|-------|------|-----|-------|
| Door    |     | ✓     | ✓    |       |      |     |       |
| Boy     | ✓   |       |      | ✓     |      |     |       |
| River   |     | ✓     | ✓    |       |      |     |       |
| Chicken | ✓   |       |      |       | ✓    |     |       |
| Book    | ✓   |       |      |       |      |     |       |

Ms Shedd suggests that the young people's thesaurus *In Other Words* will supply students with numbers of synonyms to place across the top of similarly constructed adjective noun charts.

4 *Filling in the Story* Children study stories that are stripped of verbs and must add powerful ones to complete the storylines. At other times they work on stories stripped of adjectives, nouns, or adverbs. Sometimes children's results produced by adding words will be far different from the original story.

5 *Verb Pantomime* Given verb cards like *hobbled*, *housed*, *stayed*, teams pantomime the verb in a test frame like *The tiny m use \_\_\_\_\_*. Watchers guess the verb. Older students can identify their own verbs to pantomime.

6 *Nonsense Stories* Children create stories in which all nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are nonsense words they invent. Each nonsense word must conform to the requirements of the part of speech it represents. Other children substitute real words for the nonsense ones to check the use of the major classes of words.

7 *Nursery Rhyme Patterns* Young people convert familiar nursery rhymes into parts of speech patterns for writing. They then create

\_\_\_\_\_ (a line of nonsense sounds)

The n and the n!

The n v ed prep the n

The adj n v ed to see det n

conj the n v ed adv prep

the n

their own versions of the rhymes based on the patterns. On the preceding page is a pattern one upper grade group devised based on "Hey Diddle Diddle."

- 8 *Elephants and Madness* More sophisticated poems, likewise, provide models for student writing based on parts of speech. Take, for example, Rossetti's "Sea-sand and Sorrow."

*Sea-sand and Sorrow*

What are heavy? Sea-sand and sorrow

What are brief? Today and tomorrow

What are frail? Spring blossoms and youth

What are deep? The ocean and truth

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

What are \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

What are \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

What are \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

What are \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Working from this pattern, Joyce Murray's fourth grade cooperatively composed

*Elephants and Madness*

What are cumbersome? Elephants and madness

What are ponderous? Problems and sadness

What are funny? Clowns and jokes

What are gay? Parties and cokes

**Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills**

- Locate a piece that can be converted into a parts-of-speech pattern for structured writing. Decide the grade level at which the pattern is appropriate. Either try the pattern with a group of children or try it yourself to see how easy or difficult the activity actually is.
  - Devise a creative lesson sequence to involve children directly and orally in study of a particular grammatical relationship. Prepare the materials you will need. Try out the lesson with a group.
  - Analyze several language arts textbooks published in the last three years to determine —
    - how the sentence is being approached and defined,
    - how parts of speech are being defined,
    - what specific aspects of usage are being taught and the approach being advocated,
    - the amount of space dedicated to formal language study as compared to speaking, writing, listening, and literature-related activity,
    - the nature of the activities and the opportunity given students to discover relationships for themselves;
    - the kinds of supplementary materials available to you.
- These points are ones you should think about too as you work on textbook selection committees in your school district.

## Learning about Language Origin and Change

Recently educators have seen an increase in materials dealing with language origins and development. Today concepts commonly encountered in language arts text series include —

### Concept: Language Is Constantly Changing

#### *Supporting Ideas*

1. New words are constantly being added to a language to meet demands of a changing lifestyle and environment.
2. Word-making mechanisms include compounding, development of words that are analogies of existing words, incorporation of slang expressions, merger of parts of other words.
3. New words come into a language through borrowing from other languages; this occurs especially when language groups meet and interact. *Scientific words* may result through conscious construction of words based on Latin or Greek roots and affixes.
4. Some words drop from common usage as the need for them lessens.
5. Existing words may acquire new meanings, pronunciations, and even spellings as time passes.
6. What is considered acceptable usage may become unacceptable and vice versa.
7. As dialectal groups within a language interact, some language cross-fertilization occurs.
8. Dictionaries are records of word spelling, meaning, and pronunciation; dictionaries change to reflect changes in the language.

### Concept: Some Forces Exist to Stabilize Language

#### *Supporting Ideas*

1. Books about language such as dictionaries, style manuals, and grammars have a stabilizing effect on language, holding back changes in written expression that appear in every day oral expression.
2. Rapid means of oral communication tend to unify language — telephone, television, radio. The same is true of transportation that cuts down travel time among peoples.

### Concept: Some Languages Are Related through Common Ancestry

#### *Supporting Ideas*

1. There are generally more similarities among languages related through common ancestry than among those not so related.
2. Major language groups are called families; families trace their origins to a common ancestor.
3. English belongs to the Indo-European language family that can be traced back thousands of years to a location in eastern Europe. Closest language relatives to English are the Germanic languages including Dutch and German.
4. American English is most similar to other dialects of English such as British English, however, major differences in vocabulary, syntax, and pronunciation exist among dialects.
5. Word changes can be traced back for thousands of years so that one can find out when and how most words entered the language.

To place young people in contact with these concepts, language texts introduce topics on the development of alphabet systems, language borrowings and families, history of English, comparisons among different languages and dialects, history of specific words and names. Generally these topics appear at the upper elementary level and are intended to bring heightened understanding of language relationships rather than increased language facility.

**Ways of Handling Historical Language Materials.** References such as Helene Laird and Charlton Laird's *The Tree of Language* (1957), Henry Mencken's *The American Language* (1963), or the child's *First Book of Words* by Sam and Beryl Epstein (1954) offer background on language origins and change. Having read about the way language has developed, a teacher may be tempted to share the material by telling and explaining, the material is fascinating and storylike. On the other hand, it is possible for children to discover some of the relationships for themselves through firsthand investigation. By actually studying samples of different languages, young people gain greater appreciation not only of language as a changing medium of communication but of the way linguists operate to ferret out these intricacies.

**Language Comparison Studies** One form that language investigation can take is the language comparison study. Young people use English/foreign language dictionaries to discover equivalent words in other languages for common English words. For this activity, translation dictionaries for some of the Germanic and Romance languages as well as for a language not belonging to the Indo-European language family, such as Japanese, Hungarian, Hebrew, or Finnish, are needed. The dictionaries are stacked on a table to which students go during free time to look up a chosen word in each of the dictionaries and record data on a burgeoning bulletin board chart. Later students analyze the chart to see if they can generalize about languages that are most closely related and those less closely related.

In like manner, children can make comparison charts of the alphabet systems of past and present. Dictionaries often include letters as written in different systems under the entry *alphabet*, encyclopedias provide similar information. Some trade books also supply information on how the Roman alphabet has changed from its earliest beginnings. Young investigators can summarize this information on charts to share orally during a class talk-time.

Teachers should invite comparisons of oral language especially of different dialects of English. Recordings of country music, of folk songs, and of tall tales are readily available, as young people listen to recordings, they look for examples of pronunciation, word usage, and sentence structure that differ from their own. They can make recordings of the speech of political candidates running for national office and listen to locate specific ways that the dialect of the speaker differs from their own. Similarly, students can find or make recordings of samples of British English. The speech of Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady* is an excellent example of prestige British English while that of Eliza Doolittle as flower

She is the best source for  
Learning. Always Room for  
One More (New York: Holt,  
Rinehart & Winston, 1962)  
through all these can  
make English a "Scottish  
dialect"



girl is Cockney Having listened some students may enjoy affecting a dialect other than their own in short impromptu dramatizations

**Word Searches** From whence did this word come? Young people can attempt some answers based on searches in which they systematically track down word origins and in which they even hazard an educated guess An impressive beginning is consideration of idioms where figurative meaning differs from literal Children can think about expressions such as *a bee in his bonnet* *flipped his lid* *walking on thin ice* and hypothesize how these expressions came into being Later they check hypotheses against the actual origin in books like Charles Funk's *Heavens to Betsy and Other Curious Sayings* and his *A Hog on Ice and Other Curious Expressions* both books intended for the older set

Youngsters enjoy tracing the origin of words to determine the manner and time of introduction into English Since English has borrowed words from all the languages of the world the investigation takes on geographical overtones as youngsters search dictionary pages to uncover words that have come into English from Chinese Arabic Russian Hebrew and so forth Some interesting beginning words to pursue as a class search are *coffee* *sauna* *tea* *banana* *koala* *bear* *babushka* *succotash* *apostrophe* *batik* Working in teams with large dictionary pages to find the etymology of words investigators flip the dictionary pages to find the country of origin of these present day English words As they discover it investigators tape a word card on a large globe to show the origin Other beginning words to provide searchers warmed up to the task are *hamburger* *turkey* *danish* and *frankfurt* — words that quite literally come off the globe Later young people in pairs work in a word search station to think up other words to look up and to add to the Globe of Words A next possible step is for children to trace the origin and meaning of their own first and last names Children plot last names on a map to show place of origin they use suffixes like *s* *son* *ssen* *ski* and prefixes like *Ben* *Mc* and *O* to figure out meaning Some dictionaries will supply young investigators with the meaning of their first names as well as the origins

Some words speak for themselves clearly indicating through their form the reason they came into being Compound words such as *bulldog* *bluebird* *weeping willow* *snapdragon* and *bumblebee* are easy to analyze A bumblebee was named after the sound it makes a bluebird after its color while bulldogs and snapdragons acquired theirs based on a resemblance to other things Weeping willows bend their branches down as if they are crying unhappily Young people can keep alert for words that provide equally clear clues Once uncovered the words that speak for themselves are attached to a giant mobile in which a word card is suspended from a horizontal rod and a second card supplying the hypothesized origin is suspended from the first If the horizontal rod is long enough hundreds of words can be attached at different heights as young language sleuths look and look for more to add

Word searches can become continuing class projects that extend for many months and focus on different kinds of words As children search for words that speak for themselves to add to a mobile they can simultaneously search for—



An interesting reference is Isaac Asimov's *Words on the Map* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1962)

- words that have entered the English language within the last twenty years — words such as *Ms*, *zip code*, *litterbug*,
- slang that is now part of the accepted language — words such as *rap* in *He likes to rap with his friends* and *totalled* as in *He totalled the car*,
- slang words they previously but no longer use,
- 'in' words that are enjoying high popularity today,
- words taken from someone's name — words such as *watt*, *sandwich*, *teddy bear*,
- onomatopoeic words that communicate their meaning through sound *zoom*, *purr*, *clip*,
- scientific words put together by scientists and inventors

These words can be hung from twine crisscrossing the upper atmosphere of classroom space, the result is a room filled with floating words

A search of just one state  
map — Idaho —  
produced names such as  
these to hypothesize  
origins  
Moscow Salmon Creek  
Sun Valley Lewiston  
Silver City Twin Falls  
Butte Bonner's Ferry  
Yellow Pine and Coeur  
d'Alene

**Language Investigation and Social Study.** Word study of the type just described should correlate with social science investigations, for the development of language parallels the development of peoples. Migration, conquest, and trade patterns are reflected in language change. Similarly language tells much about the social relationships and values of people past and present. It tells about scientific, technological, and industrial progress as well as about geographic and economic factors being encountered and overcome in an attempt to build and maintain a way of life. In this respect the surfacing of new words in a language and the falling into disuse of others serve as a barometer on which investigators can read changes in human activity.

In terms of classroom study, this means that as youngsters trace the development of their country, they consider not only how their nation changed but also how their language changed in response. One way to correlate language and social study is through map investigations. Children thinking about the early settling of New England search maps for town, city, and state names that reflect the origin, values, and way of life of the colonists as well as the geography of the new land. Looking at the settlement of the middle colonies, children compare the names they find on maps of New Jersey and New York with names found in England, Holland, and Germany. As they trace the westward movement of pioneers across the country, again they search maps for names that indicate who the pioneers were, what their interests and religion might have been, what perils they were encountering, and even what the first industrial, agricultural, or mining ventures might have been.

The result of these investigations can be Word Maps on which young people plot names and words that were added as a part of the country was explored and settled. On their maps, children plot Indian, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Chinese, African, Portuguese, Hebrew words that entered American English as many peoples contributed to a burgeoning language. The result, too, can be Word Timelines on which youngsters plot words that came into the language at key points in its history. Word Timelines become a prominent feature within a classroom as words are hung on a dated cord suspended just below the lighting fixtures.

Similarly in studying the development of Europe and Asia as well as the trade patterns across those two continents, young people can focus on language change. Talk of Marco Polo can include discussion of new products and new words that were transported across the 'Silk Road'. Talk of the opening of Japan to western trade can include consideration of words that moved from Japanese to English and, of course, from English to Japanese. Study of the Norman conquest and the migration of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes to the British Isles should involve identification of words that moved with the conquerors and the migrants. Map study as a language tool is appropriate here too as young people plot arrows to indicate migrations, conquests, and trade patterns and add words that followed the trail of human interaction.

The same can be done with study of current day events. Considering the contribution of science to modern living, young people focus in on words that reflect the changes: *pasteurization, sputnik, radium, television, atomic bomb*. Considering words that reflect the state of international relations, they identify expressions such as *cold war, iron curtain, detente, missile crisis*. Considering words that reflect the state of domestic affairs, they identify expressions that have become popular in their own life times — *Watergate, bugs, taps, Ms*.

In short, much of what children learn about the history of language can be accomplished in the context of the development of people. In so doing, children perceive language as part of the total sphere of human activity and as a changing medium of communication that reflects events in the world at large.



Involve older students to browse through Isaac Asimov's *Words of Science* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962). Hsory's *Words from History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968) is equally inviting.

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Many atlases contain one or more language maps that identify, where the major languages of the world are spoken. Study several, and based on one, devise an activity through which children will encounter a fundamental language relationship. Try the activity with a group.
- Analyze the treatment afforded concepts about language origin and change in at least two language arts text series published in the last four years. Use the concepts and supporting ideas listed on pages 369–70 as a checklist against which to analyze coverage.
- Select one of the statements listed as a supporting idea under the language concepts on pages 369–70. Devise a learning/teaching sequence through which young people discover that idea.
- Analyze the content of the social sciences introduced at one upper elementary grade level in a school district's social science curriculum or a social science text series. Identify points at which you could develop language understanding within the context of social studies.

### Language Study — A Summary Thought or Two

Study of conventional usage patterns, grammar, and language origins and change are found in most language programs if judged by the space

allocated by popular elementary language text series. Given the fact that schools today include English language study in the curriculum, teachers must think creatively of ways to make language appear to young people as the exciting area that it is. This is essential if the primary objective of language study is to be realized — heightened appreciation of the marvel of language.

Little excitement, however, has been generated in the past by traditional means of instruction that ask children to fill-in-the-blanks of workbook exercises, underline sentence parts, and recall lengthy lists of words that may function as specific parts of speech. These methods, moreover, have done little to extend children's ability to interact orally. For these reasons, language instruction should stress

- 1 oral interaction in which children together play with words and sentences they are generating,
- 2 investigations in which children discover for themselves fundamental language relationships, and
- 3 immediate application to writing where written conventions are involved.

Through direct manipulation of language, students learn how language works. In addition, they learn that language is a wondrous tool through which to communicate thoughts with others. These are important goals of language programs in elementary schools.

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Spelling,  
handwriting, and  
dictionary  
delving-catching  
a bandersnatch!

“No use, no use!” said the King. “She runs so fearfully quick. You might as well try to catch a Bandersnatch! But I’ll make a memorandum about her if you like — She’s a dear good creature — he repeated softly to himself as he opened his memorandum-book. Do you spell creature with a double e?”  
*Through the Looking-Glass*

Are you a good speller? Or do you, like the King in *Through the Looking Glass* wonder about the spelling of words like *creature*? Find out by taking the following multiple-choice test

Directions Select the correct spellings from among the options provided

- |                  |                |                |                |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 a acomodate    | b accomodate   | c accommodate  | d accomodate   |
| 2 a sepearte     | b separate     | c seperete     | d separete     |
| 3 a eschelon     | b eshelon      | c ecshleon     | d echelon      |
| 4 a phlegm       | b phalem       | c phelegm      | d phelem       |
| 5 a plagianze    | b plagerize    | c plaganize    | d plaginze     |
| 6 a hippopotomus | b hippapotomus | c hippopotomus | d hippopotamus |
| 7 a yoman        | b veoman       | c yoeman       | d yowman       |
| 8 a kimona       | b komono       | c kimono       | d komona       |
| 9 a appropos     | b apropos      | c appropo      | d apropo       |
| 10 a affect      | b effect       |                |                |

(as used in the sentence “What is the \_\_\_\_\_ of government on the people?”)

Now check your spellings against the answers provided in the keynote on page 378. Did you receive a perfect score? Perhaps not. Few adults have mastered the intricacies of the English language to the extent that they can tackle the spelling demons of English and vanquish all.

### Looking at the Spelling of English Words

You may have made several kinds of errors in selecting the spellings in the preceding test, these are the same kinds of errors that children incorporate in their spelling

- letter deletions
- letter additions

- letter transpositions
- letter substitutions
- confusion of one word with another of rather similar sound or spelling

**The Errors Spellers Make** To leave out a letter is a common spelling error. Letter deletion occurs because in English speakers at times do not pronounce all the letters used in spelling a word. For example, the *g* in *phlegm* is not pronounced when saying the word, nor is the *s* at the end of *apropos*. Similarly in English words, letters such as the *m* in *accommodate* are doubled with the doubling not clearly apparent in the pronunciation. Pronunciation may also be a cause of deletion of letters such as the *i* in *plagiarize*. Speakers may fail to say the sound represented by the *i*, then follow through and not include a letter representation in its spelling.

A second kind of error you may have made on the pretest — letter addition — occurs for several reasons too. Speakers may mispronounce a word such as *phlegm*, turning it into a two-syllable word. In so doing, they add an extra vowel sound which appears then in the incorrect spelling of the word. Sometimes spellers overcompensate. Knowing that there are letters appearing in English spelling but not in pronunciation, they think that the word to be spelled is one of those traps and double when they should not as in the case of spellers who add an extra *p* to *apropos*, failing to account for the French origin of the word.


A third error — letter substitution — is in actuality two kinds of errors. First, spellers substitute one consonant for another, perhaps an *s* for a *c* as in *echelon* or an *f* for a *ph* as at the beginning of *phlegm*. Second, they substitute one vowel for another as an *a* for an *o* in *hippopotamus* or an *o* for the *i* in *kimono* or an *e* for an *a* in *separate*. These errors reflect the fact that not just one letter or letter grouping is used to represent a phoneme or speech sound. In English, this is true of both vowel and consonant sounds. For example, the sound /f/ is represented on paper not only by *f* but also by *ph* and *gh*. The sound /s/ is represented by both the symbols *s* and *c*. In the case of vowels, the situation is equally complex. It is often times impossible to distinguish by the pronunciation which written vowel is being spoken. Could you differentiate the sounds represented by the letters *a* and *o* in *hippopotamus*? Additionally, a single vowel sound may be represented by numerous symbols. Think for example of the way /ō/ is represented in the following words: *though*, *boat*, *sew*, *go*, *toe*, *beau*, *faux* (as in *faux pas*), *yeoman*, *boat*.

Another error is to transpose letters. This is one which spellers are attempting to avoid when they think *Is receive spelled eiorie?* Because both the *ei* and *ie* patterns are found in English, they are unsure which to apply in a particular case. This is true in other situations as well. *Is u rin kle spelled ie or ei?* *Is buoy spelled uo or ou?* *Is yeoman spelled eo or oe?* Again because in each case both patterns exist in the English symbol system, a speller may be uncertain.

Some spellers confuse *complement* with *complement* with *prin cipal* and therefore are well aware of another potential pitfall in the English symbol system. Spellors sometimes write a word different from



The following books provide added information on spelling:  
 Gertrude Boyd Spelling the Elementary School (Columbus, Ohio: McGraw-Hill, 1971)  
 Jack Lutz, Expanding Spelling Skills (Innsbruck Publications, 1973)  
 Check also the February 1975 issue of *Elementary English*, most of which focuses on spelling and handwriting instruction.


  
 An ae s o s p e n g i e t
   
 a e a c c o m m o d a s
   
 e p a a e s h a c o n
   
 p t e g m p a g a z e
   
 h p o o p e a r t u s j u m a n
   
 k m o n o e p o p o s e e c t


the intended one because in English there are sets of words with identical or near identical sounds but which differ in spelling — the homophones *meet/meat its/its tuolt/too their/there* to name just a few. Then there are the pairs of words that are very close in sound and spelling words like *buoy/boy desert/dessert are/our affect/effect*. These can prove treacherous even to the most conscientious spellers.

**A Linguistic View of the English Sound-Symbol System** In the past many teachers have despaired as they have perceived the inconsistencies of English spelling and the lack of a one-to-one correspondence between the sound and the symbolic spelling systems. They have despaired when faced with demons like the ones on the pretest. Because spelling does not always reflect pronunciation because some words resemble others in pronunciation but not in spelling because exceptions exist to spelling generalizations language arts teachers have resorted to teaching spelling as a memory exercise with repetition through writing and rewriting as the primary vehicle for developing mastery of spelling tools.

More recently however linguistic analyses of the nature of English spellings have shed new light on the spelling scene. Linguists have asked and are asking: Are there not more consistencies in the way speech sounds are represented on paper than previously realized? Are there not sound-symbol relationships that if taught will have broad application and make more likely the correct spelling of newly encountered words? If there are relatively consistent sound-symbol relationships should not these be stressed in school spelling programs?

The linguists point to consistencies such as the way the letter *t* is used to represent the speech sound /t/. *t* is used 96% of the time to represent /t/ according to Paul Hanna, Richard Hodges, and Jean Hanna (1971). For ease in communicating linguists call the smallest unit of speech sound a *phoneme* and call the written representation of a speech sound a *grapheme*. Thus one can say that the grapheme *t* is used overwhelmingly to represent the phoneme /t/. As this example indicates phonemes are placed between two slant lines to differentiate them from graphemes. Other graphemes are used with equal consistency to represent particular phonemes. Hanna, Hodges, and Hanna report that *d* represents /d/ in almost 98% of the cases in which the speech sound occurs. *b* represents /b/ about 97% of the time while the same is true of the use of *n* and *r* to represent /n/ and /r/. Even the *al* as found in *pan* and *at* is represented by *a* more than 96% of the time.

Advocates of a linguistic approach to spelling instruction contend that even the spelling demons such as those on the pretest are more regular than is first suspected. Hanna, Hodges, and Hanna explain that only certain parts of a demon are irregular, departing from expected sound-symbol relationships. Most of the phonemes in a demon abide by the sound-symbol relationships familiar to spellers. Thus a word like *women* is completely regular; the phonemes being represented by graphemes just as anticipated, save for the /t/ in the first syllable. According to Hanna, Hodges, and Hanna, the number of spelling demons in the language is rather small: only 3% of the core vocabulary.


  
 See Paul Hanna, Richard
   
 Hodges, and Jean Hanna,
   
*Spelling: Structure and
   
 Strategies* (Boston:
   
 Houghton Mifflin, 1971),
   
 especially page 97, for a
   
 description of this and
   
 other regularities.

Linguists are also contributing understanding of the word building characteristics of English. Although English is not considered an inflectional language, still many English words are built by the addition of inflectional endings: the plural endings on nouns, tense-changing endings on verbs, endings like *-er* and *-est* on adjectives. By the use of inflectional endings, *radiator* is transformed into *radiators*, *walk* into *walked*, and *slow* into *slower*. In English other words are built by adding suffixes and prefixes to roots, in so doing a person often changes how the word will function in a sentence. For example, the word *loose* can function as an adjective, with the addition of *-ly* it becomes *loosely*, which can serve as an adverb, with the addition of *-ness* it becomes *looseness*, which serves as a noun, and with the addition of *-en* it becomes *loosen*, which serves as a verb. Still more words are formed through compounding as in the combination of two short words to form *anywhere*, *anthill*, *sidewalk*. Generally one can spell a compound word if one perceives what the components are and can spell the shorter words that combine to form the compound.

Not only are the linguists bringing understanding of fundamental sound-symbol relationships and of the word building characteristics of the language, but they are also uncovering information about historical relationships and word derivations. They are explaining current spellings in terms of the way words were pronounced in the past. For example, today linguists explain the silent *k* at the beginning of *knight* in terms of past pronunciation when speakers did pronounce the *k*. They explain the *et* spelling of *l  t* in *ballet*, *buffet*, and *croquet* in terms of a common French origin.

### Organizing Spelling Learnings Around Linguistic Concepts

The language concepts being uncovered by language specialists have had considerable impact on ideas about spelling instruction in elementary schools. The impact extends to the manner in which teachers should teach as well as the manner in which children should study words and acquire skills and understandings.

**Organizing a Spelling Program.** Since there are some rather consistent relationships within the English sound-symbol system, many spelling programs select and group words so that learners work with these basic relationships. Spelling lists are comprised of structurally related words — words all of which exemplify a particular phoneme/grapheme relationship, word-building principle, or historical derivation. One week fourth graders working in the Scott, Foresman spelling program focus on words such as *riddle*, *muscle*, *whistle*, *wrestle*, *puzzle*, and *nickel*. *Chapel*, *label*, *model*, *cancel*. Another week the spelling list is comprised of words such as *wagon*, *gallon*, *cotton*, *common*, *lesson* as well as words such as *urchin*, *cabin*, *cousin*, *satin*, *ruin*. In each case, spellers are learning to associate certain graphemes with particular phonemes. In the program youngsters are introduced initially to the notion that a relationship exists between speech sounds and written symbols, and emphasis is in the lower



After Hanna et al  
Spelling (1971) p. 168



grades is on gaining skill in working with sound-symbol relationships. There is a similar emphasis in other spelling programs.

In most spelling programs, emphasis in upper elementary grades is on the word-building characteristics of our language. The intricacies of adding prefixes and suffixes to roots are considered in depth as upper graders manipulate endings such as *-ing*, *-tion*, *-ure*, *-age*, prefixes such as *un-*, *dis-*, *in-*, *ex-*, compound words, and syllables. To allow learners to perceive how words have been put together, weekly lists are comprised of structurally related words. Students may focus on words built by adding *-ed* and *-ing* to root words that end with the letter *y* or on words comprised of a prefix + root + suffix. They may work with word etymologies. For example, seventh graders working in Silver Burdett's *Spell Correctly* (1971) are asked to write a word based on a given etymology.

- a Greek *stenos* (narrow) + *graphein* (to write) one who writes with special symbols
- b Latin *lingua* (tongue) person who studies languages

Of course, since there are words that do not follow regular sound-symbol relationships or word-building principles, most programs provide the young speller with considerable exposure to irregular words — *snurks*, as William Kottmeyer and Audrey Claus in the McGraw Hill series term them. Snurks violate the sound-symbol relationships of English and, therefore, must be identified and then learned by some repetitive practice, as Kottmeyer and Claus explain to fourth graders:

- Snurks are words with unexpected spellings
- We learn to spell snurks by — finding why they are snurky, and learning the snurky parts

Children go on to identify words that do not abide by the generalizations they already know. For example, they must identify *key* as a snurk because “we expect to spell /ē/ with *e*, *ee*, or *ea* at the end of one syllable words like *me*, *see*, and *tea*.” In this case /ē/ is spelled *ey*.

**Inductive Learning** In spelling programs based on linguistic concepts, learners are encouraged to discover word relationships for themselves. They analyze words sharing a common feature to figure out sound-symbol relationships, the manner in which affixes are added or the way compound words are formed. Based on the examples, students project generalizations to explain the spelling of related words. Some spelling programs then ask spellers to apply their newly conceived generalizations to other words that are spelled according to the same principles. This is an inductive approach to spelling instruction. In inductive teaching and learning, students start by considering specific, related examples, they identify similarities, and they build those similarities into explanatory generalizations that they apply to new examples. In inductive or discovery learning, students do not memorize a generalization given to them, rather they put together the pieces of the generalization so that it is meaningful. Spelling authorities generally agree that memorizing generalizations presented by the teacher or textbook has little effect on ability to spell.

See the Teacher's Edition  
of *Spell Correctly*, Grade  
7 (Morris, N.J.: Silver  
Burdett, 1971), p. 57

See Basic Goals in  
Spelling, Book 4 (New  
York: McGraw Hill, 1976),  
p. 51

Second graders can learn inductively by adding words to word ladders. These are comprised of words containing the same sound even though the sound is represented by different letter patterns. By studying the ladders second graders can draw conclusions about the spelling of the sound. In this case they can conclude that *ay* is a common spelling of /ā/ when the sound occurs at the end of the word. *ai* and *a-e* are spellings when the /ā/ occurs in the middle of the word. Note: Words on this ladder are from Silver Burdett's *Spell Correctly* Grade 2 (1971).

Second graders can add the Kottmeyer symbol for snurk next to words on the ladder that have unexpected spellings.

Once children have analyzed word relationships having the image of the word ever present on the bulletin board reinforces the learning.

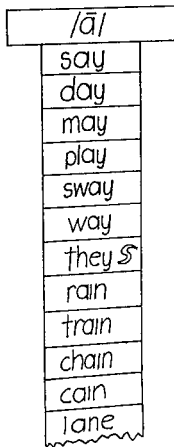


FIGURE 10-1 Spelling Word Ladder

Analysis also plays a role today in studying individual words. In a modern study plan, spellers start by looking at the word, for visual elements are important in learning to spell. They check meaning and pronunciation in the dictionary, especially if they are uncertain about how to use or say the word. They say it aloud to note its sound pattern. Then comes the analytical step, spellers think about the relationships between letters and sounds, identify suffixes and prefixes, identify "snurky" spots, consider the syllable pattern, relate the words to those previously studied. In sum, learning to spell a word has many facets. It involves

1. seeing the image of the word — the visual facet
2. understanding the way the word is used — the meaning facet
3. hearing and saying — the aural/oral facet,
4. thinking about word structure — the analytical facet,
5. writing — the kinesthetic facet

**Spelling in the Content Areas** Word analysis, including hearing the sounds of words and thinking about structure, can be a part of contact with words in all areas of the curriculum. Spelling is, after all, a tool to be used. For that reason in teaching the natural and social

sciences, other aspects of language and literature, mathematics art and music one should encourage children to apply their growing analytical skills to new words encountered For example, middle graders studying Eskimo culture will encounter the phrase *totem pole* Children and teacher say the word It is written on the board The teacher asks What sound do we hear at the end of the word? How is that sound represented on paper? What is the vowel sound in the last syllable? in the first syllable? What letters do we use to represent these sounds on paper? The teacher suggests 'Study the shape of the word Close your eyes to see it in your mind's eye Try writing it All this is part of social studies learning

In like manner sixth graders being introduced to precision pantomime may stop momentarily to make sure they hear and say the /m/ at the end of the word to make sure they note the grapheme that encodes the vowel sound in the second syllable These sixth graders will stop too when discussing the advantages of being bilingual they will note the meaning of the prefix *bi* and relate *lingual* with its *gu* spelling to *linguist*, which has the same spelling Studying geology they will pause to look at the prefix *geo* and talk about its meaning they will look at how the vowel sounds are encoded in a word like *sedimentary*, and they will talk about the origins of the word *igneous* which comes from the Latin word meaning 'of fire'

Only by using their observational and analytical skills on a daily basis as they meet words in diverse contexts will children develop functional spelling ability Only when looking at new words with an analytical eye becomes second nature will young people use spelling as a tool for expressing thoughts The ultimate success of spelling lessons, programs, books is to be judged in terms of children's ability to spell in everyday writing and on papers prepared for other curricular areas To spell correctly the words on the Wednesday or Friday test is not necessarily evidence of spelling skill In that respect, the very act of writing on a variety of topics provides opportunity for spelling learning

### Building Linguistic Spelling Lessons

Teachers may want to experiment with spelling lessons built on linguistic concepts and structured inductively so that spellers discover relationships for themselves In the following section is a description of how three teachers designed inductive learning sequences and tapped the spelling book as reinforcement after children had begun to see basic relationships These sequences can serve as models for teachers designing original spelling lessons

**Lower Primary Kindergarten, Early First Grade** Ms Robinson's group of early primaries was gathered around the flannelboard as she launched into talking reading spelling time Each child in the group held in hand a flannel piece that the teacher had just distributed Let's all hold our pieces up high Ms Robinson urged and the children responded by waving their pieces Who wants to begin? she asked Who wants to stick a flannel piece to the board and explain

what it is? ' As children came forward to place a piece on the board, they named it — *bat, ball, book, belt, house, hat* — and all the children repeated the name together. When all the pieces had been placed on the board, Ms Robinson directed, ' Let's repeat once more all the names of things on our board, and let's listen to the sounds we make at the beginning of each naming word ' The little ones repeated the names, and following the teacher's example, they emphasized slightly the beginning sound of each word. ' Now, ' proposed Ms Robinson ' we're going to do something else with our pieces. We are going to put all the pieces that have a name starting with the same sound we hear at the beginning of *bat* on the left side of our board. We will put all the pieces whose names don't start with that sound on the right.

←  
listening to recognize  
beginning sounds

One by one children volunteered to move pieces to the appropriate side until those representing books, balls, bats, boats, belts were clustered to the left while those representing houses, dogs, shovels, hats, stars were clustered to the right. Again the children chorused the names of the items in each grouping. As they named the items in the group beginning like *bat* the teacher handed b-shaped cutouts to individual youngsters who stuck the letters under the appropriate flannel board pictures — those that started like *bat*.

←  
distinguishing /b/ from  
other sounds

Then Ms Robinson suggested, ' Leonard, will you take down the letter *b*? Joan, will you please mix up all the flannel pieces on the board? ' When they had done their jobs, Ms Robinson redistributed the b-shaped cutouts to the youngsters. ' If you can find the picture of something whose name begins with the same sound as *bat* and *ball* wave your *b* letter in the air. ' As children waved their *bs*, Ms Robinson nodded toward one youngster to indicate that he was to place his cutout on the board. Joe placed his *b* under the book. The teacher asked, ' Is that right? ' The youngsters waved their *bs* calling out a ' yes, ' and the teacher continued, ' Why?

←  
relating the phoneme /b/  
to the graphic symbol *b*

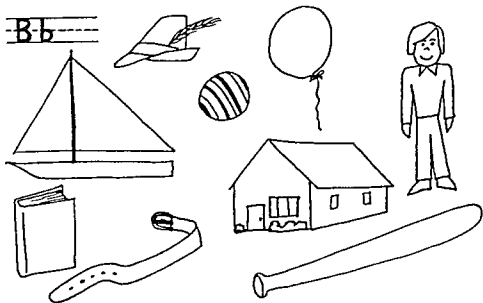
It sounds like *bat*. ' some children answered together.

' And how do we begin the spelling of both these words? ' queried Ms Robinson.

With a *b*, ' responded the children together as was their custom.

As each child placed a *b* under an appropriate cutout children decided whether the answer was right and explained why. When each had had a chance to place a *b*, Ms Robinson displayed a duplicated sheet she had prepared as follow-up. The sheet contained rough sketches of a number of simple items, some whose names begin with the /b/ and others whose names begin differently. At the top of the page she had printed the symbols *B b* that are most commonly used to represent /b/. Children were to color the pictures of things whose name begins with the same sound as *bat* and whose spelling begins with *b*. Under each, they were to print the appropriate symbol — a *b*.

Before Ms Robinson dismissed her students to work independently on the spelling follow-up sheet and on other tasks located at learning stations in the room, she shifted gears. ' Let's play with other words. Which one of us has a name that begins the same way as *bat* and *ball* and whose name would be written down with a *B*? '



The children chorused "Ben!" and she wrote *Ben* on the small board she held in her lap

"Let's think of other words that start the same way," Ms Robinson directed. The children supplied numbers of words, which the teacher added to her lap board. From those words the children put together a story about Ben and his friend Bill

identifying other words that begin with /b/

#### Boating

Ben bought a boat. It was a big, bright blue boat. Ben asked Bill to go for a boat ride. Ben and Bill took the boat to the beach. The boys put the boat in the water. They climbed in. The boys stayed in the boat all day.

As children dictated lines of the story, Ms Robinson wrote them on charting paper. The children later read the story aloud and pointed out the words that started with /b/.

**Grade Three.** It was Monday morning. Fred Bronsky's third graders had come in a bit tired and quiet, but by ten-thirty they had come to life and Mr Bronsky called the nine youngsters in his middle spelling group together at the side spelling table. On the table he spread a series of cards face down. "Let's start," he said, with a round of Figure It Out. Do you remember the rules?

Robin responded, "We each turn over a card. When we figure out how the words on the cards are the same, we take a number to show when we figured it out, and we turn our backs on the table so we don't see any more clues."

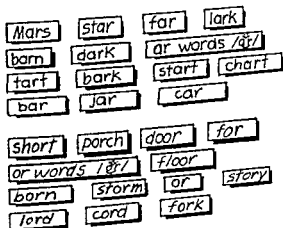
"Yes," replied Mr Bronsky, "but remember — no hand shoving when you take a number." And so the game began. Tom turned over *dark*, Marcia turned over *star*. Bruce uncovered *porch*. Jack uncovered *burn*. Pete turned up *door*. At that point Marcia grabbed number one from the pack of number cards and turned her back. Slow down.

identifying other words that begin with /b/

Marcie" As more words such as *Mars*, *floor*, *start*, *lark*, *story* were uncovered, other children took numbers and turned away so that they could not see the clues as more words were revealed on the table, they had to figure out the feature shared by the words they had seen up to the point when they had taken a number

"O K Record your hypotheses' The children wrote their hypotheses on strips of paper to which they added their order number Slips went down on the table and students compared slips Almost all had figured it out the words contained a vowel - r spelling "Great," rewarded Mr Bronsky, who declared the youngster with a correct strip and the lowest number card the winner of the round 'Now let's figure out the differences by sorting words into related piles On the desk he placed *star*. "Pick a word that goes with *star* " Five hands shot across the desk as hands added *dark*, *start*, *chart*, *short*, and *bark* "All but one" One hand snaked out to pull the word *short* from the group "Explain why " Bruce explained that *short* did not have an ar Ronald added that the word did not have the same sound as the others With the word *short* Ronald began a second pile, words that contained or On the spot, the third graders made labeling cards ar words /är/, or words /ör/. The labeling cards were added to the piles to which they applied

identify ng groups of words that contain the same sound



Mr. Bronsky gathered up the word cards and handed them to Pete to read in random order without showing the cards to the others As Pete read, the eight others pointed to either the ar or or label Pete checked to see if the letters on the word card corresponded with the letters on the labeling card before placing the word in the pile indicated by most of the pointers Because a few children pointed incorrectly as Pete delivered the words, the group ran through the activity a second time with Marcie now delivering the words as she tape recorded her reading Mr Bronsky explained that Marcie's tape would remain at the spelling table with the word and labeling cards Children in pairs could come to the table to listen to the tape and categorize the words independently

"Before we take a pretest on some of these words," Mr Bronsky

continued, "we'll talk about how we spell words that have the same sound as in *bar* or the sound as in *for*. When we hear the final sound in *bar*, what letters do we use to represent the sound on paper?"

Pete volunteered "ar."

Bronsky responded, "Give that idea in a sentence, Pete." And when Pete gave the sentence, Bronsky recorded it as "Pete's Generalization" on the sound-symbol generalization chart the class was compiling.

#### *Pete's Generalization*

A symbol we use to represent /ar/ is ar

Robin contributed the next generalization

#### *Robin's Generalization*

A symbol we use to represent /or/ is just or

Bronsky urged "Look at all our /ôr/ words, in some cases the symbol is not just or."

Bruce saw the point and amended Robin's Generalization by adding "and sometimes oor."

Then the nine third graders went to the pretest step. The teacher dictated the twelve words from Lesson 21 of the third grade spelling book they were using: *star, start, dark, bark, jar, short, porch, storm, story, fork, door, floor* (Silver Burdett, 1971, p. 67). Students corrected their papers by comparing their responses to the words as written on the game cards.

Bronsky assigned some of the analytical exercises that accompany the lesson in the spelling book, indicating that these should be completed independently during the next few days. He gave each youngster a puzzle sheet on which he had listed definitions of words containing the letters -ark. Youngsters had to puzzle out what the words were. On the sheet were other letter patterns containing -ar or -or. Students who finished the -ark puzzle could devise their own based on these related spellings. In devising puzzles students could refer to the classroom dictionary of rhyming words in which words containing a similar sound are clustered together.

**Grade Six.** Janet Blazdell dictated only three words to her students waiting with pens poised in readiness: *action, mention, protection*. Students listened to all the words before writing to see if they could detect any feature shared by the three. When a student thought that he/she had detected the shared feature, the student wrote the words on paper.

As pens came to rest, Ms. Blazdell held up three cards, each containing one of the words. Children checked their spellings against Ms. Blazdell's. "All right, the shared feature, please?"

A sixth grader briefly explained. They all end in the *shun* suffix. In previous lessons, students had built words from other suffixes, and they were already familiar with the word-building characteristics of suffixes.

→  
discovering  
generalizations about the  
relationship between  
phonemes and  
graphemes

→  
identifying individual  
spelling problems

→  
refining ability to work with  
ar and -or

# I. Complete the puzzle

## The Ark Puzzle

a sound a dog makes

bark

the opposite of light

dark

a place where we go to walk

park

st play

shark

a big fish with jaws and fns

spark

a flash of flame

Mark

the name of a boy

lark

a kind of bird

Dark

the covering on a tree

mark

a grade we get on a paper

hark

Listen carefully

## II Write an -ark one-liner

Write a sentence in which you use at least three -ark words

*The shark and lark in the dark of the park made a spark mark on the bark.*

## III Create an original puzzle

Make a puzzle of definitions of -ark, -ark, -ark, -ark, -ark, or -ark words similar to the -ark puzzle. Outline your puzzle here.

The \_\_\_\_\_ Puzzle

Definitions

Words

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

"How is the suffix spelled?" pressed the teacher. A second student wrote tion on the board. "Good. Today we are going to conduct a search for shun words. We'll be trying to locate as many as possible and we'll be working in three person groups. Later we'll count words to determine the winning group."

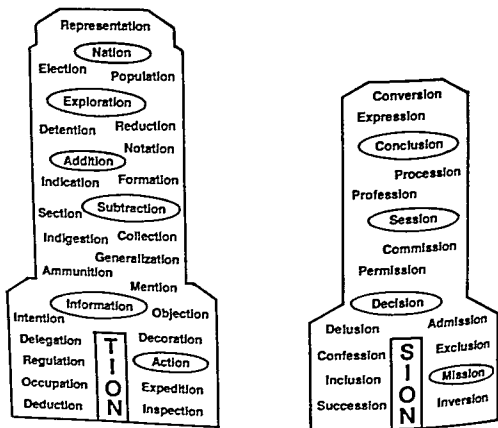
Discussion ends in shun. Can we write down words with the shun spelling? a student asked.



' Yes, as long as the suffix sounds the same as the ending on *action*. Just group words together that utilize the same spelling of the suffix. If you want, try building your words into towers on construction paper. Build a separate tower for each different spelling of the suffix so that we can generalize later on "

Student groups went to work. Most groups divided the labor. One worker checked the dictionary to be certain that words listed were spelled correctly. One thumbed dictionary pages in search of other words containing the suffix. A third served as secretary recording words on tion and sion towers. The results amazed the students for the tion towers expanded beyond expectation. In contrast, the sion towers were considerably smaller.

FIGURE 10.2. Tion and Sion Towers



Students may circle five to six words they select to use in writing during the week.

When students could think of no additional words to list, they regrouped and checked each other's towers to find misspellings, invented words, and duplicates. Working from the specific examples contained in their towers, students generalized.

## The Shan Generalization

The suffix *shan* is represented generally by *tion* and less often by *sion*. The *sion* form of the suffix tends to be used when the suffix is added to verbs ending in *s* and sometimes *t*.

Words built with the *shan* suffix generally work as nouns.

←  
generalizing about the  
spelling of the suffix

Ms. Blazdell followed the search and generalize session with self-testing. She flipped on the tape on which she had previously recorded the *shan* words from the list supplied by their spelling book. Children wrote the words and then opened their books to check their own spellings against those listed to see which required more extensive study. During the days that followed the sixth graders completed the exercises in the text lesson and invented crossword puzzles containing the listed words. They could return to the tape to test themselves again on words previously missed.

**A Summary** You probably have perceived the features shared by the three lessons just described. For although the grade levels and spelling generalizations are diverse, structurally the lessons are similar. Each teacher began by focusing on specific words. The upper grade teachers encouraged spellers to supply some of the examples. Students guided by key teacher questions then proceeded to analyze similarities within words and where appropriate noted differences. Based on the similarities and differences, students concocted generalizations — relationships existing among the words. Each teacher was primarily concerned with enriching children's understanding of basic spelling principles with broad application beyond a single word or two. Each was stressing thinking, not memorizing.

Likewise, the three teachers did not begin by pretesting or referring to a book and assigning exercises. Rather, a book was used only after the children had already played with the generalization in question. It provided follow-up practice, opportunity to apply generalizations in interpreting problems, and reinforcement of ideas already considered in group interaction.

## Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Try your hand at structuring a discovery lesson in which you use a book only as a follow-up to a class session. Use the two pages from the fourth grade *Word Book* (Rand McNally, 1976, pp. 56-57) as the content for your discovery lesson.
- Analyze several different spelling programs on the market today. Decide which ones lend themselves most easily to discovery type learning.

## Building a Spelling Program Based on Individual Differences and Needs

Ms Blazdell provided a tape for pretesting, later she placed the tape at the spelling table where students who had had further practice with the words could return for additional self-testing. Mr Bronsky divided his class into spelling groups, he worked with a group of nine average spellers while others in the class studied independently. Furthermore, his follow-up exercises for the nine contained several options. Students who found they needed less practice could go on to devise puzzles, which could be solved by others in the study group. Ms Robinson worked with her total class of early primary children, as she did, she kept eyes and ears alert for those children whose answers tended to be incorrect. Later she scheduled additional time for these youngsters at the flannelboard.

In any class, the range of spelling ability is at least equal to the range of reading ability. Some children have a keen sense of sound differences, they can manipulate sound-symbol relationships with ease and can look at groups of related words and identify features common to the group. Others have trouble with sounds, symbols, and/or word-building units, they may have trouble with problem solving as well, being able to perceive only the simplest relationships. Schools must structure spelling programs to take into account differences such as these.

**Cycling a Weekly Spelling Program.** Organizing students into skill groups for spelling instruction is not so cumbersome as it first appears to the teacher who already has active reading and arithmetic groups. In the past spelling has been organized into a weekly scheme. Monday is set aside for pretesting and for some preliminary study. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday students carry out related activities and written exercises. Wednesday is the time for mid-week self testing, Friday for final testing. With just a slight adjustment teachers can alter this weekly scheme to permit attention to individual needs by grouping students for instruction. Cycling groups on a daily basis is the key.

**Day 1** A group meets with the teacher for analysis of specific words and discovery of the fundamental generalizations. Analysis is followed by pretesting so children know what words to emphasize in individual study. Then the teacher explains related exercises and activities that provide additional work with the generalization and opportunity to practice difficult words, these activities youngsters complete independently during successive spelling periods. To facilitate independent activity, one may borrow a page from Don Morris's lesson book. He gives each youngster in his fourth grade class a duplicated study agenda that resembles the one on the following page.

Together group members fill in specific exercise numbers, pages duplicated sheets, and games for the week, so that the same basic study guide can be used with each group each week. Children fill in the activities and decide on original activities they find most helpful and/or appealing. Mr Morris's students add options such as writing a composition containing as many of the weekly words as possible, con-

Spelling Agendum for Week of \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mark the time and date when you begin an activity in column one and when you complete an activity in column two. You may add original activities at the bottom of the chart. You must complete activities that follow bullets.

| I | II | Activity                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   |    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete the duplicated puzzle game sheet no. 2</li> <li>Complete exercises 1 and 2 on pages 23-24 of your spelling book</li> </ul> |
|   |    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Run a self test of the words using the tape at the spelling table</li> </ul>                                                        |
|   |    | Analyze and study the bonus words. Run a self test                                                                                                                         |
|   |    | Complete exercise 3 on page 24 of the spelling book                                                                                                                        |
|   |    | Play one of the spelling games at the spelling table with your partner                                                                                                     |
|   |    | Original activity                                                                                                                                                          |
|   |    | Original activity                                                                                                                                                          |

cocting an original crossword puzzle, making an artistic collage of the words, writing silly one liners with words containing the same sound

**Day 2** Students work independently on the items included on the study agendum. They usually begin with those tasks that are required.

**Day 3** Students continue to work independently. They may go to the spelling table for self-testing.

**Day 4** Students generally work with their spelling partners on one of the original activities previously determined or join together to play a spelling game. Students who have not yet self tested do so at the spelling table.

**Day 5** Students complete at least one original activity and test on the words being considered during that five day sequence.

**The Cycle** Group M begins the weekly cycle on Monday and completes it on Friday. Group W begins on Wednesday and ends the cycle on the following Tuesday. Group F begins on Friday, ending the following Thursday. This cycling of three groups frees the teacher on Tuesday and Thursday to work with individual students who may need special attention as a result of misunderstanding or absence and students who are such exceptionally good or weak spellers that they cannot gain from the activity of any of the groups. The teacher may reserve a few minutes during the week to return to a group to dictate words on the final day of a cycle, but this is actually unnecessary. If words and sentences are recorded on audio tape, children can take the test monitored by a student from another group.

By grouping for instruction teachers can provide different words and generalizations to students functioning at diverse levels. Some children may be working with material from the third grade level, others with level four material. By grouping, teachers can take more time with a slower group — perhaps using only a portion of the words on a list during a five-day cycle — spend more time reviewing with those who need it, and encourage really adept spellers to strike out on their own. Some spelling books supply more difficult words for master spellers, “Bonus Words” offer extra challenges to these boys and girls. Additionally, individuals may work on their own Current Words — basic words they have misspelled on several occasions. Children include these on their study agenda for extended analysis and practice during a five-day cycle.

**Providing Varied Learning Experiences.** Not all learners respond equally well to the same instructional techniques. Some have trouble perceiving sound differences, for them the visual image of a word may have more impact than sound-symbol relationships, and learning activities that stress the appearance of words are particularly meaningful. Others respond best to kinesthetic, or motor-related, approaches in which writing is a significant element in a study plan. Still others learn best when an analytical approach is combined with visual, kinesthetic, and oral-aural approaches.

Then there are the irregular words that do not adhere strictly to spelling generalizations. Hanna, Hodges, and Hanna (1971) propose that these be learned by rote memory, students turning primarily to visual and kinesthetic clues to help them spell the demons. In the following sections are numbers of activities to help children focus on word clues as well as game-like activities to engender interest in spelling.

**Visual Techniques** Some teachers have found it helpful to have one or two students in a spelling group print or write words from the weekly list on individual cards. If letters are large, the cards tacked up high, ledy-piggledy around the room present a constant visual reminder of the word spellings. Because the words are ever present for inspection, students are more likely to select the words when writing.

With primary grade children, the teacher can use individual word cards cut into jigsaw-type puzzles. Each card is cut into several miscellaneous shaped pieces, which are collected in an envelope. A player must put the pieces of the puzzle back together again by using the visual image of the word as a clue. As students gain skill in working with their words, the pieces form several word-spelling puzzles are mixed together to make the game more complex.

An attractive collage of spelling words can be designed with a black marker and light colored paints. Children creatively wash a surface with an assortment of water colors. When the wash has dried, they print their words across the surface with the black marker. Word collages are tacked up where they can be seen and can jog the memory. Similarly spelling words can be worked into many different kinds of



See Paul Hanna, Richard  
Hodges, and Jean Hanna  
Spelling Structure and  
Strategies (Bos on  
Houghton Mifflin 1971) p  
123

art projects Children can fingerpaint their words cut them into corrugated cardboard and spray the finished product with glitter or design creative signs containing them Whatever the art medium employed the finished products can be suspended with string from lighting fixtures providing a continuous visual image

**Kinesthetic Techniques** Young children can trace the letters of a word following a pattern supplied by dots In similar fashion they can move their fingers across a surface on which letters have been imprinted so that the letters are rough to the touch Teachers are using a variety of techniques to form a rough imprint One runs a card on which a spelling word has been enscribed through her sewing machine without thread The result is a pattern of holes clearly perceptible to sensitive fingers A second uses strips of felt or other highly textured materials she pastes string to the outline of word letters so that tracing fingers can feel their way across the spelling word

Beverly Fellingner and her upper grade students devised a game based on the feel of word shapes The students design words on paper by twisting pipe cleaners into the appropriate shapes and gluing the twisted cleaners onto cards Each child designs a different word so most of those being studied are transferred to pipe cleaner cards These are collected at the spelling laboratory table to which a student goes with a spelling partner One is blindfolded and is handed cards by the partner The blindfolded student feels the design of the word and guesses from its shape what word it is Later the partners change roles so each has a chance both to guess and to watch

Repetitive practice can be pleasurable Here are a few ideas to motivate children to review their words

- 1 With chalk a child writes a word several times in sand filling a large sized baking tray By shaking the sand gently the child causes the word to disappear and can write the word again in the fresh surface of sand The same end can be achieved with a magic slate — an acetate sheet placed above a hard surface The slates can be purchased in a hobby shop Having written on the acetate surface the child lifts it up and the writing disappears
- 2 Place a canister of water near the chalkboard In the canister rest a paint brush with a long handle the kind of brush used for art work A child writes his/her words on the board with the water wet brush The water quickly evaporates to leave a clean surface for further practicing
- 3 A lap sized chalkboard is a handy surface on which to practice words Having filled the board with words the child erases to start again Incidentally today plastic coated lap boards on which a child writes with a water soluble crayon are available The crayon washes off effortlessly with a damp cloth
- 4 Some youngsters delight in writing words on large sheets of newsprint with paint brushes dipped in tempera The results are attractive and can provide a visual image of words in the classroom A husky crayon serves equally well

- 5 **Fingerprint** is a fine medium for practicing words. Children paint their own Current Words in blues, reds, or greens, crisscrossing words to produce an attractive design.

**Game-Like Techniques** Active team, card, and solitaire games are contexts for students to build, see, and practice words.

- 1 **Matched Pairs** Devise a deck of fifty-two cards plus one joker by making twenty-six matched pairs. All cards are dealt out to from three to six players. Players match pairs in their hands and lay the pairs on the table. In turn each player draws a card from another player's hand. If it matches one already held, the player reveals the matched pair, if not the player adds the card to his/her hand and the next player takes a turn. The winner is the one who first matches all cards held, the loser is the one who holds the joker at the end. One can make decks of cards in which matching pairs consist of

- a picture on one, its word symbol on its mate,
- a word on one, a rhyming word on its mate (e.g., *sick, quick*),
- two-syllable words with one syllable on each card (e.g., *bat, ter*),
- prefixes on some cards, roots on others (e.g., *dis-, cover*),
- suffixes on some cards, roots on others (e.g., *wonder, -ful*),
- a homophone on one card, its definition on the mate (e.g., *their* belonging to them),
- a contraction on one card, its full equivalent on the mate (e.g., *haven't, have not*),
- half a compound word on one card, the other half on the mate (e.g., *play, ground*).

|       |
|-------|
| mail  |
| door  |
| nope  |
| born  |
| wrap  |
| star  |
| sten  |
| short |
| hoof  |
| harm  |

In developing decks of matching pairs, plan ahead so that even with several combinations, every card will have a mate.

- 2 **Crossword and Hidden-Word Puzzles** Encourage youngsters to build their weekly words into original crossword and hidden-word puzzles. When a child has concocted a puzzle, tape it beneath a piece of clear acetate of the type used for transparencies, set it on the spelling table. Other children go to the spelling table to complete the puzzle by writing with wax crayon that can be washed off the acetate surface leaving the puzzle ready for the next child to solve.
- 3 **Solitaire Dominoes** Make a set of domino cards to accompany a word list. Each word should appear on the ends of two dominoes so that an individual playing solitaire dominoes can match the domino cards end to end to form a chain. A player may have to juggle the order of the cards so all dominoes fit on the chain.
- 4 **Word Baseball** Prepare four stacks of word cards, each stack containing words of greater difficulty. Divide the class into two teams—one team at bat, the other in the field. A player from the batting team selects a card from one of the stacks. It is read to the batter by the pitcher from the opposite team. If the batter spells the word correctly and it is a word from the hardest stack, the correct word rates as a home run. A correctly spelled word from the stack of next hardest words earns a triple; one from the next stack earns a double.

and one from the easy stack earns a single. A player who gets a base hit can be moved around the bases by batters who follow just as in baseball. A word misspelled is an out. Three outs and the opposite team comes to bat. Decide ahead how many innings there will be in your baseball game. Let batters bat by writing words on the chalkboard.

- 5 **Word Goalposts** Write a Current or Bonus Word downward on the left side of the paper. Write it again upward on the right side of the paper so that the letters in both columns are aligned. To complete a round of Goalposts, players must find words that fit between or overlap the letters forming the goalposts. For each letter between the posts, a team scores a point for each letter that overlaps the team subtracts a point from its total score. For each word misspelled, the group subtracts a number equal to the number of letters in the misspelled word. Obviously, longer words even if they overlap the posts by a few letters net many points for a team. The team with the highest score at the end of a given time is declared the winner. Encourage players to search a dictionary for words to include. Here is an example done first without then with dictionary assistance.

|   |      |   |   |              |                      |   |             |   |    |        |                   |
|---|------|---|---|--------------|----------------------|---|-------------|---|----|--------|-------------------|
| c | om   | e |   | 2 pts        |                      | c | reat        | e |    | 4 pts. |                   |
| r | oa   | r |   | 2pts         |                      | r | eservoir    | u | st | 3      | 7 pts             |
| e | ardr | u | m | 4            | 1 = 3 pts            | e | xha         | t |    | 4      | 2 = 1 pt          |
| a | un   | t |   | 2 pts        |                      | a | ngen        |   |    | 5      | 1 = 3 pts         |
| t | ot   | a | t | 2 - 1 = 1 pt |                      | t | erman       | a | l  |        | 1 = 4 pts         |
| u | nd   | e | r | 2 - 1 = 1 pt |                      | u | nreasonable | e |    |        | 10 p s            |
| r | ide  | r |   | 3 pts        |                      | r | emanded     | r |    |        | 7 pts             |
| e | na   | c | l | 2 - 1 = 1 pt |                      | e | cstalt      | c |    |        | 6 p's             |
|   |      |   |   |              | 15 pts               |   |             |   |    |        | 42 pts            |
|   |      |   |   |              | without a dictionary |   |             |   |    |        | with a dictionary |

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Construct a set of kinesthetic or visual materials that would be helpful in working with primary grade children. Perhaps try making a set of words done in pipe cleaners and try to recognize the words yourself just by touch.
- Create an original game to use with upper grade children to reinforce spelling learnings. Write out directions for students and describe all needed equipment especially the game board if you decide to include one as part of your game.



- Devise a study agenda of activities which youngsters pursue independently after an initial discovery session. Use the pages from the fourth grade spelling book (Rand McNally, 1976, pp. 56-57) as the content of the activities or pages from the series in use in your school. Try to include activities you create as well as those based on exercises supplied by the text.

### Introducing the Dictionary

A basic tool for the speller is the dictionary. There are three kinds of dictionary-related learnings toward which elementary schools strive. First of course are skills related to locating and interpreting entries. These include ability to alphabetize, use guide words, find a word of uncertain spelling, interpret definitions, and determine how a word should be used, pronounce words from their phonetic spellings, and interpret etymological notations. Second is appreciation of the value of the dictionary as a reference and writing tool. All the skill in the world matters naught unless the writer puts skills into practice by taking dictionary in hand as the need arises. A third kind of learning becomes important in the upper elementary grades: it is the ability to handle other dictionary-like tools: the thesaurus, a dictionary of synonyms, a rhyming dictionary. Many of the skills developed through work with a standard dictionary can be applied as students use these references.

**Wanting to Use the Dictionary** Perhaps the most significant way to make children value the dictionary is to make it the most important book in the classroom. A student each day serves as dictionary sleuth: the sleuth's job is to check the spelling of all difficult words recorded on chalkboard or charts. As students brainstorm words for story invention or poetry writing and as words are recorded on the board, the sleuth keeps the dictionary on standby alert. Writing on the board and encountering a tricky word, the teacher nods toward the sleuth to run a dictionary check. Holding conferences with individual children who are editing written work, he/she keeps a dictionary close at hand. Instead of marking a misspelled word, the teacher comments, "Steve, I'm not sure about this word. Let's check it." At that point, he/she simply hands the dictionary to Steve, who looks it up on the spot.

Although the picture dictionary with large print is a perfect introduction to the dictionary for young children, large, thick, and impressive dictionaries serve particularly well in upper elementary classrooms. Fifth and sixth graders of course must practice working with the book, but once skill has developed in locating and interpreting entries, checking a word is a real adult challenge. The dictionary sleuth glories in the role of custodian of a book that is almost as big as he/she is.



Caution: If your cards are lightweight, tape your line against a wall surface to prevent the cards from flipping over.

**Alphabetizing** A fundamental skill to be developed in lower grades is ability to alphabetize. Some teachers have found that this is the time to take out their story clotheslines and put the lines into service again as youngsters play Hang the Alphabet. Also needed are 26 clothespins and a stack of index cards each inscribed with one letter of the alphabet in its lower case form. The cards are dealt out to youngsters in the group who participate by coming forward in turn and clipping their cards to the line in alphabetical order. During the first few playings, an alphabet is posted around the room so young children can check their growing alphabet line against one already in correct order. During further repetitions — some group, some individual — the posted alphabet is taken down. Now as children go to the alphabetizing center to rehang the alphabet on the line suspended along one side of the room, they must complete the task on their own, checking it later against a card kept at the center. Later children hang the alphabet printed out in upper case letters.

Older students can work in the same way with word cards. A first set is comprised of 26 words, each beginning with a different letter of the alphabet. A second set of cards consists of words beginning with the same letter. More complex sets are made up of words starting with the same first two letters, or even the same first three letters. Older students alphabetically clip their cards on the clothesline, which now can be suspended from a light fixture so it hangs downward with the words placed beneath one another as in a dictionary column. The activity can be converted into a learning station where one or two students go to order words on their own. At the learning station are a number of word sets, a guide for self-checking, and a sign up here sheet where students sign their names each time they complete a set.

Both picture dictionaries and ABC books are a fun way for younger children individually to learn about alphabetical order. On a page a youngster writes a word, perhaps with teacher help, and draws a picture about it. If each child works with a word beginning with a different letter, the illustrated pages can be spread on the floor after they are completed. Youngsters gather up the pages in alphabetical order to form an original ABC book. Slightly older children can produce a picture dictionary, each child preparing one page that includes a word, the word used in a sentence, and a descriptive picture. All pages are alphabetically bound together by a group of children.

Then there are shoe box dictionaries that children make by filing individual word cards alphabetically. On cards are words the child commonly misspells. Looking for a word in his/her file, the child must rely on growing ability to work with alphabetical order. As files expand, primary children create markers to divide cards into alphabetical groupings: A B C, D E F, and so forth.

**Using Guide Words** Ability to handle guide words is essential if students are to use the dictionary efficiently. To introduce students to guide words, some teachers have found the following sequence useful: they —

- make word cards, each containing a guide word from a dictionary page. For this they use guide words from three successive pages of a dictionary, such as *leaf* and *leasing*, *least* and *leg*, *legacy* and *leisure*,
- make word cards of entries found on those three dictionary pages,
- lay out the guide words on the floor,
- deal the word cards to students, who in turn must come forward to place their words in alphabetical order between the appropriate guide words

Later all the cards are gathered at a learning station where young people needing additional practice go to group words within appropriate guide words. Other sets of cards can be placed at the station so that students have the opportunity to handle words from different sections of the dictionary.

Here are a few brief ideas for additional activities

- 1 Call out a letter of the alphabet and either the word *before* or *after*. Quickly point to a participant who must respond with the letter asked for. For example, if the teacher calls "before p," the correct response is o.
- 2 Young children line up in the alphabetical order indicated by their given names. Repeat the activity using children's family names.
- 3 Supply a series of study sheets on which a dozen words are listed. Using their dictionaries, students complete the sheets by listing the guide words on the dictionary page where the word is found, for example,

| Left Guide Word | Word   | Right Guide Word |
|-----------------|--------|------------------|
| <u>whose</u>    | wngwam | <u>wild</u>      |
| <u>pose</u>     | port   | <u>porter</u>    |

**Locating Words of Uncertain Spelling** A major strength of a spelling program that develops understanding of sound symbol relationships is that the child has somewhere to begin when looking up a word that he/she does not know how to spell. How often does a teacher hear the query, 'How can I look it up if I don't know how to spell it in the first place?' The child who has some understanding of the graphemes through which a particular phoneme can be represented has a starting point. The searcher begins with the most common graphemes used to represent the phoneme and systematically checks out that and other possibilities.

Of course, young children will become disheartened if they look too

long and unsuccessfully. In checking a paper for possible spelling errors, the child who has looked up three or four spellings to no avail may turn to his/her spelling mate for a consultation. The two search together, and if still unsuccessful may ask for searching assistance from the general editor — the teacher.

To avoid such failure in the context of written expression at times the teacher supplies needed words. Working with first and second graders the teacher can stand by the board as children write and list words requested, or can move quietly around the room assisting individuals who have a spelling problem. Hanna Walsh, a first grade teacher in Warren, New Jersey, encourages her children to write according to the way the words sound and to record their ideas in pencil. Later she places a different number above each word that needs to be rewritten. The numbers are keyed to a slip of paper that she staples to the corner of the page. By each number on the slip, the teacher writes the word correctly spelled. Children erase their own spellings and replace them with the teacher's. One advantage of this technique is that edited papers are available for bulletin board mounting. A more important advantage is that youngsters in their first recording must draw upon their growing understanding of sound symbol relationships, the very same thing they must do when looking up a word of uncertain spelling in the dictionary.

**Interpreting Dictionary Entries** As students enter the upper elementary grades, the dictionaries they are using will contain some entries that are relatively complex. Children can grapple with these complexities in numbers of small group work sessions. The teacher begins by printing a dictionary entry on a transparency that is projected for group viewing. Children start with a simple entry such as this one from the *Thorndike Barnhart* (Scott, Foresman) *Beginning Dictionary*.

canopy (kan' ə pē), a covering fixed over a bed, throne, or entrance or carried on poles over a person. See picture. *noun plural canopies*

They can draw their conception of *canopy* based on the information given. Since the dictionary containing this entry supplies a picture, children can compare drawings. If one youngster holds the dictionary from whence the entry came, that person checks the pronunciation by referring to the model words at the bottom of the page or at the beginning of the dictionary. Once meaning and pronunciation have been clarified, pupils can consider the way the word functions in sentences. In this case the word is a noun, one of the easiest to start with because the word has a concrete referent.

In upper grades dictionary entries are more complex. An entry from Scott, Foresman's *Advanced Dictionary*, 2nd ed., includes information about word relationships:

colonnade (kol ə nād) *n* series of columns set the same distance apart, usually supporting a roof, ceiling, cornice, etc. (< French < Italian *colonna* < *colonna* column < Latin *columna*)



n = noun

Children again can compare drawings based on the verbal definition to an actual picture in the dictionary. Now they must decide the meaning of *n*. They must check the beginning part of the dictionary to discover how to interpret the etymological information. With other entries children will encounter information on synonyms, special usages, and frequently confused words. Again an overhead transparency that all can see turns dictionary study into a discussion time in which young people cooperatively solve dictionary puzzles.

Much of this kind of dictionary work can occur as part of ongoing class activity. As children encounter words of uncertain meaning or pronunciation in information being shared orally, they can stop to run an immediate dictionary check. At that point, teacher and students can puzzle out the symbols and notations found in an entry. By placing dictionary work in a meaningful context, the teacher helps children perceive what a helpful tool the dictionary is.

**Meeting Other Dictionary-Like References.** Most people overwork certain words, and as a result these have lost communication power. *funny*, *cute*, *like*, *put*, and *make* are examples in point. Children can construct cards inscribed with alternates or synonyms that have nearly the same meaning as the original but communicate the idea more fully. They print a word such as *funny* on a small strip of paper attached to a length of rope hanging vertically from a projection in the classroom. As students discover plausible substitutes — *amusing*, *entertaining*, *humorous*, *witty*, *laughable*, and so forth — they print those words on other strips that they clip to the same rope. Eventually students turn the bulletin board into an original thesaurus by hanging several lengths of rope on it, each containing alternates for a different overworked word.

The thesaurus is a goldmine for word searchers. The synonyms for *funny* given above are from *In Other Words: A Beginning Thesaurus* by Greet, Jenkins, and Schiller (Scott, Foresman, 1969) — a splendid volume which should be found in every lower elementary classroom. *In Other Words* provides synonyms for tired and overworked words, defines substitutes, and supplies a sentence to explain word functioning. It also gives antonyms. Students who can locate words in this beginning thesaurus may decide to create an original thesaurus containing the most overworked words they know plus viable substitutes. Each working group can contribute a page to "Our Classroom Thesaurus." Young children enjoy designing their thesaurus pages similar to the pages in Patrick Drysdale's *Words to Use: A Junior Thesaurus* (Sadlier, 1974). In the Drysdale thesaurus words are inscribed on shapes communicating some aspect of their meaning.

Upper grade elementary students will enjoy the more complex *In Other Words: A Junior Thesaurus* by Greet et al. (Scott, Foresman, 1969), Scholastic Books' paperback *Synonym and Antonym Dictionary*, and eventually Roget's *International Thesaurus* (Thomas Crowell). Before moving into these more sophisticated references, students require instruction in use of the volume. Probably the most helpful kind is that given to a small group of youngsters who hold the book in hand and focus on several specific words. For example, during a first

encounter with Roget's, the book is laid out on a table around which three or four students are gathered. They handle it to discover that it has two parts, the index-like back and the entry-containing front. Searchers begin in the back, find a word there, and move to the entries via the reference numbers supplied in the index. Words such as *say*, *move*, and *see* are easy beginnings. Children list powerful substitutes beneath the word on a card, concoct sentences containing the substitutes, and add those to the card. A standard dictionary also on the table offers definitions of unfamiliar words.

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Devise a dynamic activity to involve children in alphabetizing or in work with guide words. Stretch your imagination to put together something original. Try the activity with a group.

### Manuscript Writing for Active Young Writers

On the same morning when Ms. Robinson introduced her young primary students to the relationship between the /b/ and the b, she wrote a good sized, lower case b on a chalkboard area in the corner of her room. She carefully drew the letter by making a tall stick man and next to it, a circle. Children watched and compared Ms. Robinson's b to the b on the alphabet cards pinned above the board. Three or four youngsters came to the board to print a b, and then returned to their places in the talk circle. When all had a turn, Ms. Robinson erased the board, in the middle wrote another lower-case b, and above the b mounted a picture of a boy. All day long that b and picture remained there. As children completed other work, they returned to the board to write more bs, cleaning off what they had written before going back to their seats.

On the following day Ms. Robinson also worked with students at the flannelboard reviewing the sound/symbol relationships between /b/ and b. That morning too, the b went back on the chalkboard, this time with the upper case B. Again Ms. Robinson demonstrated to the youngsters the strokes necessary to make each form of the letter. In each case, she presented the component strokes in an almost rhythmic way repeating, "Draw a tall stick man down, draw a circle all the way around the b." For the upper-case form she repeated, "Draw a tall stick man down, draw a loop around and another loop around the capital B." Some children practiced the rhythm of the strokes by making them with chalk on the board. Others practiced by drawing with a crayon on plain paper that had been folded to provide a top and bottom guideline.

Because the chalkboard had proved such a popular learning option on previous days, now Ms. Robinson set up several easels with paint pots and brushes. On the top of each she mounted a model of upper and lower-case bs. The easels became additional writing stations for independent practice.

learning to form the b




Preparing for Writing. In Ms Robinson's room the children were preparing to write letter forms from the moment they entered. For weeks Ms Robinson provided a variety of what might be called *prewriting* or *readiness activities*. Children drew with brush and paint at the three easels always set up in the art area; they drew at the chalkboard and on large sheets of paper with good-sized colored crayons. In addition, they

- worked with modeling clay and Play Dough, sometimes molding the material into letter like shapes,
- cut out shapes they had drawn,
- manipulated interlocking puzzle blocks,
- plugged little colored sticks into the holes of puzzle boards to form designs,
- twisted twine around dowels that protruded from a peg board and outlined letter shapes

These are all activities that increase children's ability to control the fine muscles of hand and fingers.

As youngsters in her class painted, drew, and handled, the teacher kept eyes alert to determine which children tended to "do" with the left hand. She knew that there was nothing wrong with being left handed, she had no intention to force children to work with the right hand. Her purpose was to identify probable lefthanded children so that later on she could meet their special needs.

Ms Robinson also engaged the children in more structured readiness activities. One day she shared Tana Hoban's *Circles, Triangles and Squares*, a book of fine photographs containing many geometric shapes. In preparation, the teacher had cut three shapes from colored

construction paper — a , a , and a . These she had

mounted with magnets to her magnetic chalkboard. As the children studied the pictures in the book, they located shapes similar to those mounted on the board. The child in the group who found a shape traced it with his/her finger for others to see. To provide additional practice, the teacher prepared a duplicated sheet containing geometric shapes. The children as follow-up traced the shapes with crayon and cut each one out, pasting similar shapes together on another sheet. On another occasion Ms Robinson presented a slightly more difficult task. She duplicated a sheet with four well-spaced parallel lines. Between the first two, she drew a circle; between the second and third, a triangle, and between the last two lines a square. Children had to add more shapes to each space. They could go on to draw their own original pictures containing lots of circles, triangles, and squares. During this time, the Hoban book remained at the reading table. Children could return there to look again at it.

To help children begin to perceive the details in various shapes, Ms Robinson gave children the opportunity first to trace and then to copy designs of progressively greater complexity. Children who had coped

circles, triangles, and squares went on to study series of simple shapes to pick the one different from the others in the series

At the same time Ms Robinson provided many visual experiences with words written down. On the first day of school, she affixed to each desk a name plate for the child who chose that place. The plate was colored oaktag on which she inscribed the child's name, starting with an upper-case first letter and followed by lower case letters. When a youngster completed a drawing or a cut and paste page, Ms Robinson wrote the child's name lightly in pencil in the upper right hand corner as the child watched her form the letters. With heavy crayon, the child traced the letters of her/his own name. Since the children produced several papers each day, they had numbers of opportunities to trace. As children began to trace their names with ease, Ms Robinson printed the name on the paper, and children wrote beneath the model. Very soon there were children who on their own initiative were copying their names from the name plate on their desks.



gaining skill in reproducing shapes



forming the letters of one's name



Practicing penmanship while recording real data

Each day too Ms Robinson engaged the children in experience storywriting. She took special care with the letters she wrote down as children dictated words to her, the letters she wrote were identical in form to the models posted above the chalkboard and provided by the company publishing the handwriting materials used in the school.



trict. She formed the letters following the steps outlined in the published materials. Not all handwriting programs utilize the same letter shapes or sizes; some require students to fill the complete space between the guidelines with upper-case letters, while others require students to leave a slight gap between the top of the upper-case letters and the top guideline.

Children were at the same time beginning to develop heightened familiarity with the letter shapes. Ms. Robinson made available alphabet blocks and plastic alphabet cutouts that children placed jigsaw-puzzle style into a molded frame. Children played with alphabet-shaped noodles, forming them into collage-like designs by gluing them to small colored oaktag squares and circles. They matched blocks, cutouts, and noodles to the letters on the alphabet letter guides mounted around the classroom and attempted to place their alphabet pieces in the same order by comparing letter shapes.

Working with youngsters in K-1, teachers can experiment with some of Ms. Robinson's prewriting or readiness activities. Here are a few other creative ideas —

1. *Giant Letters.* Cut child-sized copies of the upper- and lower-case letters from corrugated cardboard cartons. Children paint the letters bright colors. Throw the large letters, then the small ones on the floor. Children order the letters matching shapes with those on alphabetical display on the classroom wall. Children can also match lower- with upper-case equivalent. Or even more fun — young children can pick up letters and dance to music with their letter partners. When the music stops, children exchange letters and start again when the music resumes. On another occasion organize the activity as a musical-chairs game, placing one less letter on the floor than the number of children dancing to the music. When it stops, they pick up a letter. A child not finding one is eliminated from that round. He/she selects a letter from those replaced on the floor by still active participants — perhaps a letter from her/his name — to take out of the game.
2. *Letter Rhythms.* One teacher of first graders composed a little rhythm to go with each letter and set the rhythm to music. Mrs. Lemke's rhythm for capital B is —

I can make the letter B,  
And this is the way I do it.  
A straight line down and around and around  
And that is the capital B.

Her rhythm for lower-case b is almost the same:

I can make the letter b,  
And this is the way I do it.  
A straight line down and just once around.  
And that is the little b.

Out on the playground Mrs Lemke chalks the upper case B in giant size she suggests that one can chalk or tape the letter to the classroom or gymnasium floor instead The children play follow the leader as they skip around the outline of a letter and sing the appropriate rhythm Teachers can compose original third lines for each of the other letters by remembering that manuscript is composed of straight and slanted lines circles and humps Such words as *straight line down circle around angle do in one hump down* can be used in composing third lines A few examples are given below to guide teachers in creating their own rhythms

- n A little line down and one hump down
- m A little line down and two humps down
- t A medium line down and cross it short
- d Circle all around and a big line do vn
- v Angle on down and angle on up

- 3 **Human Letters** Children enjoy building letter shapes with their bodies using child sized cutouts from the first activity in this series as models Several children cooperatively form a letter of arms legs heads and bodies Others study the detail of the shape formed and figure out which letter the performers are pantomiming
- 4 **Follow the Letters** Children complete follow the dot puzzles by drawing a continuous line from one dot to another in the order indicated by letters in alphabetical sequence placed next to the dots The resulting picture can be a letter of the alphabet or perhaps a numeral

**Summary** Many prewriting or readiness activities are multifaceted they help children acquire the motor coordination necessary to write and they also help children begin to perceive differences in figures inscribed on paper to recognize shapes of specific letters to relate speech sounds to letter shapes and to appreciate the value of putting ideas on paper In this respect most prewriting is integrated with prereading and prespelling activity

All young children do not need equal attention to writing readiness As with reading some youngsters are ready to write at an earlier age than others who have more difficulty perceiving letter differences and controlling the fine muscles of the fingers The teacher therefore must study the behavior of individual children to determine who needs additional writing readiness activity Grouping for instruction and practice becomes essential at this point Children who do not need further instruction preparatory to writing can work at learning stations and be involved in listening constructing picture reading story drawing while others continue to work at manipulative and perceptual tasks that prepare them for handwriting

**Teaching More Highly Structured Lessons** As many children move into and through first grade they become ready for more highly structured experiences with manuscript writing They are able to work

with lined paper, especially the kind supplying a lighter guideline between two darker ones, they are ready to write letters into words. At this point the teacher can take advantage of the large lined paper that has an open area at the top for drawing and can structure a beginning lesson in the following way

**Goal** The children can write the letters *l* and *i* when a letter model is before them. They can write the letters *l* and *i* into a word.

*Sequence for the Teacher*

- 1 Within the first double space on your model sheet, write a lower-case *l*. Demonstrate precisely where the top of the "stick man" begins and where it ends. Children print the *l* on their papers and continue a row of *l*s across the page.
- 2 Within the second double space on your sheet, draw a lower case *i*. Again demonstrate where the top of the small-sized "stick man" begins and where the bottom sits. Demonstrate where the dot is placed. Children print the *i* on their papers and continue a row of *i*s across the page.
- 3 Within the third space of your paper, print first an *l*, then an *i*. Children alternate *l* and *i* across their pages. Encourage them to repeat a rhythm statement as they print.
- 4 Stop and talk about how it feels to be sick. Explain to the children that sometimes they say they are ill when they are sick. Encourage children to describe times when they were ill. Then print the word *ill* within the fourth double space. Allow time for children to print the word on their papers. Then demonstrate how they can use the width of their pointing finger to figure out how much space to leave between words. "Just one finger width from the end of the word *ill* let's begin the word again." Children continue to write the word *ill* across the page, separating each instance with a finger width.
- 5 After children have filled the remainder of the paper with more copies of *ill*, they move to the top. Suggest that the children fold their paper in half so that the space at the top has a left and right side. Children draw two pictures to tell a story about what happened to them when they were sick. The picture on the left shows what happened first, the one on the right, what happened second.

On succeeding days a teacher can start a handwriting session with some brief review, and then introduce the lower case *t*, the upper-case *L*, and the upper case *I*. Children include the writing of words such as *it*, *ll*, *ill*, *lit*, *lit* on their practice sheets.

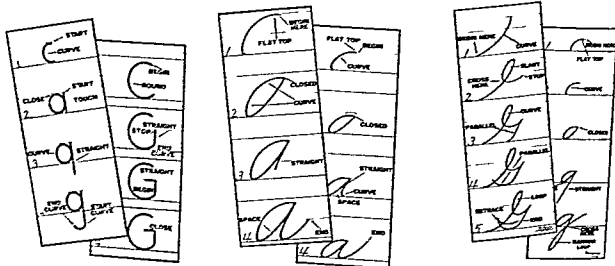
The structure of these introductory sessions is based on several principles that can be applied in designing other lessons to introduce first graders to manuscript. First, letters introduced together are often times those that are similarly formed. Some handwriting programs group the *i*, *l*, and *t* together since they are formed from a basic downward stroke. These letters are generally taught together, perhaps with capital letters formed from a similar stroke and an additional cross stroke. **L I T H F E**. Other groups are the angular letters such as the *k*.

**FIGURE 10-3** Alphabet Charts

MANUSCRIPT

TRANSITION (Curs ve)

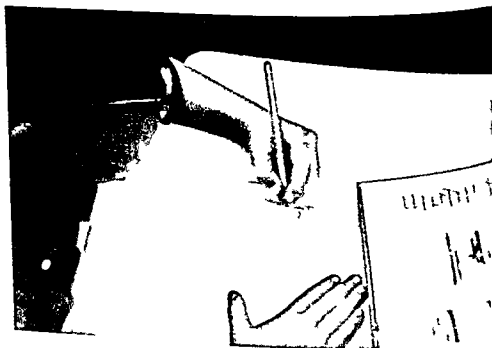
**CURSIVE (upper grade)**



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Zaner-Bloser Inc Copyright © 1975

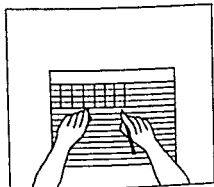
is best for holding pencil in hand how to sit and how to position the paper on the desk For manuscript writing there is no slant to the letters so the paper is generally placed perpendicular to the body and parallel to the edges of the desk for both righthanded and lefthanded

Refining handwriting through purposeful use



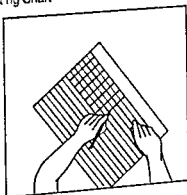
writers If lefthanded children find this position awkward they can try a second paper position that the Zaner Bloser handwriting program advocates it is shown in the diagram below

FIGURE 10-4 Zaner Bloser Method Writing Chart



### RIGHT HANDER

Paper parallel to edge of desk  
Pull writing stroke toward the center of the body



### LEFT HANDER

Paper tilted down toward center of the body Pull writing stroke toward the left elbow

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**Providing Meaningful Practice** Meaningful handwriting practice should be provided as part of ongoing classroom activity. Once children have mastered basic letter forms they print the cards, charts, labels, and duplicating masters needed for group and individual learning. Children can take turns producing

**Cards** needed to display weekly spelling words to study subjects and predicates, parts of speech, synonyms, homonyms, antonyms, contractions, alphabetical order, and so forth to play spelling games such as Figure It Out, Matched Pairs, and Solitaire Dominoes.

**Charts** of words to substitute for worn out words, of spelling generalizations discovered, of poetry selections, of procedures used in the classroom during science investigations.

**Labels** needed to affix to objects in the classroom, to desks naming who sits there, to file drawers and cabinets identifying what is kept there.

**Duplicating Masters** of selections for body chants and choral speaking of material to be included in a class newspaper or magazine, of discussion topics, of summaries resulting from science or social science investigations.

In addition, young children in grades one and two can practice hand writing by drawing on some of the same techniques they are using to practice spelling copying letters and words in a layer of sand, on a magic slate, or on the chalkboard using a brush dipped in water as a writing tool, making word prints using fingerpaint, painting large sized letters on old newsprint, drawing letters and words with flo-pen onto colored construction paper folded to provide guidelines

Children can select some of their own creative writings to share Each child in a class contributes a piece to a class book of stories, each copies in his/her very best handwriting the piece chosen for inclusion Contributions are bound together and placed in the reading center or the library for others to enjoy Pupils can make a similar collection of hand printed poems to which individuals have contributed original pieces, they print their contributions on very large-sized, heavy-grade paper and add colorful drawings The final product is a "big book" that must be read by sprawling out on the floor

Other work that children enjoy copying in their best manuscript includes

- greeting cards to be given to family or classmates on birthdays and holidays,
- invitations to parents to a class performance or a back-to-school night, to other classes in the school to share a party or performance time, to speakers requesting they visit the class,
- letters to pen pals, letters requesting information, letters to the editor of a local paper,
- thank-you notes to those who have helped the class with a project

Upper grade youngsters can use these same kinds of activities to practice their cursive writing

Since handwriting is a tool for recording thoughts, on paper, repeated use in real life situations and in preparation of written content in all school areas provides the best of practice Children practice as they prepare final drafts of stories, poems, reports, reviews They practice as they write on the chalkboard outlines of material they plan to share orally They practice as they write memoranda to teacher and classmates If children are continuously involved in composing, they will by necessity be involved in handwriting After initial sessions in which letter shapes are introduced and the sequence of steps important in forming the shapes is stressed, there is less and less need for systematic lessons as children make use of handwriting on a daily basis and the teacher works with individual children to overcome their special problems

**Diagnosing Children's Handwriting Problems** There are six elements that together result in legible manuscript — shape, size and proportion, slant, spacing, steadiness of line, and styling — the six Ss of manuscript As young people build skill weaknesses are diagnosed in terms of these six Ss so that additional instruction and practice sessions can be provided to meet individual needs In addition, watching children as they write may bring to light problems associated with

positioning of paper and pencil How do children grasp the pencil? Some may be gripping it tightly, others may be holding it at the very point, and still others may be holding it between middle and pointing fingers

Discovering problems common to several children, a teacher can schedule time for small group remedial instruction For example, youngsters having difficulty with alignment, or getting letters to rest on the baseline, gather together and focus directly on their specific problem At other times, a teacher helps the individual child with a special problem For instance, the child who grips the pencil too closely to the point is given a pencil holder, a rubber piece that slips onto the pencil above the point, the child places fingers on the rubber piece, which also doubles as an eraser

Children should be a part of the diagnostic process At first the teacher supplies youngsters with a simple self evaluation checklist Later they devise checklists specifically geared to recognized weaknesses

| Looking at My Own Handwriting                                     |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----|--------|----|-------|----|--------|----|-------|----|--------|----|
|                                                                   | Jan 1 |    | Jan 15 |    | Feb 1 |    | Feb 15 |    | Mar 1 |    | Mar 15 |    |
| Letters I have trouble making                                     |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |
| My writing                                                        | Yes   | No | Yes    | No | Yes   | No | Yes    | No | Yes   | No | Yes    | No |
| Do I keep my letters straight up and down?                        |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |
| Do my letters stand on the baseline?                              |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |
| Are my upper-case and large lower-case letters filling the space? |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |
| Are my little lower-case letters half sized?                      |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |
| Do I space my letters clearly?                                    |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |
| Do I space my words evenly across the page?                       |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |
| Are my letter lines even and steady?                              |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |
| Is my paper neat?                                                 |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |       |    |        |    |

Children periodically select a paper of their own to analyze. It should be a final draft done for bulletin board mounting or taking home. If the evaluation is recorded on the same checklist on several different occasions, the youngsters will begin to identify areas requiring more practice.

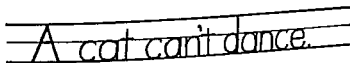
### **Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills**

- Assume your first graders have received formal instruction in writing l, i, t in both lower-, and upper-case forms as well as in writing the upper-case forms of H, F, and E. Now you wish to introduce the hump letters starting with the h. Outline the sequence of steps in the lesson as you would develop it.
- Compare the form of the letters in two different handwriting programs. In what ways do the programs differ in their approach to manuscript writing?
- Devise a creative prewriting activity for children in kindergarten. Think about the kinds of learnings you will be developing through the activity.

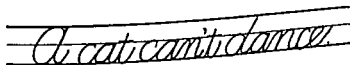


**Introducing the Cursive Style — An Example** When the third graders entered their classroom, they noticed that something had changed. Tacked above the manuscript letter strips mounted around the room was a second set of letter strips — cursive. On their desks pasted below the letter guides in the right hand corner was a second letter guide — cursive. On the board, they saw a series of guidelines that their teacher Fred Bronsky had drawn.

Mr. Bronsky was a teacher who took little time with preliminaries, he jumped into his lesson as soon as the children had settled down. "Watch me," he directed. "I'm going to write something twice. You will have to tell me how each writing differs." Mr. Bronsky went to the board, picked up chalk, broke it in two to prevent squeaking, and wrote within the first guide lines



Then he wrote within a second set of guidelines placed directly below the first.



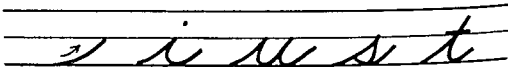
"Differences now?" he queried, and children volunteered explanations. 1 the first was manuscript, the second adult writing. 2 the first was straight up and down, the second slanted. 3 the first had separated, the second joined letters. 4 when writing the first Mr. Bronsky had stopped between letters, while in the second he had kept on going. "Exactly right," Mr. Bronsky commended, and then he went over to a second series of lines he had prepared on the board. Between the first two he wrote the word *cat* in manuscript. Between the next two, he wrote the word *cat* again in manuscript. Between the last two, he wrote the word *cat* in cursive. Then he demonstrated using dotted lines added to the middle version (see diagram) how the letters in manuscript relate to the letters in cursive.

← perceiving the differences between manuscript and cursive forms



He made a similar connection between the manuscript and cursive letters in the other words of his model sentence

Mr Bronsky distributed practice paper to his waiting third graders. The paper was ruled with a heavy baseline at one-half inch intervals and a lighter mid-guide line. As he distributed the paper, he circulated among the children showing how to position the paper on the desk, how to grasp the pencil, and how to position the body for writing. Mr Bronsky then moved toward the board to introduce the letters with an undercurve beginning.

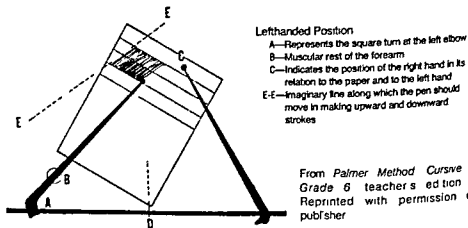
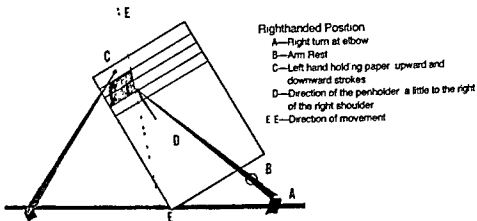


He demonstrated the *i* — starting on the baseline, moving upward with an undercurve, moving downward toward the baseline, moving upward with a second undercurve, and dotting in the space above. Children took pencil in hand, and as Mr Bronsky rhythmically repeated, ‘Curve up, move down, curve up with a tail, dot the *i*,’ and wrote a row of *is* on the ruled board, the third graders did the same on their papers. A few lefthanded children wrote on guidelines drawn on the board next to the teacher’s.

Mr Bronsky demonstrated a few other letters with an undercurve beginning — *u* and *s*, and rhythmically described the component strokes as he wrote them, “Curve up, bring it down, curve up again, bring it down, and up with the tail — the little *u*.” “Curve up, bring it down, tie it around, curve up with the tail — the little *s*.” He encouraged children to repeat the jingles to themselves while practicing the letters. As he demonstrated the *t*, the youngsters watched and concocted their own jingles to accompany the strokes, they checked the accuracy of their jingle against the sequence of strokes depicted on the guide chart on display. In short order, the third graders were joining undercurve letters into short words — *it*, *sit*, *us* — which they practiced on their sheets.

On successive days the teacher introduced other letters with undercurve beginnings — *w*, *e*, and *r* — and letters with undercurve beginnings and large loops — *l*, *f*, *b*, *h*, *k*, *p* — essentially following the letter groupings set forth in handwriting programs in use in his school. Soon he was introducing other lower-case groups, those —

- beginning with an overcurve (‘/’) the hump letters like *m n x y z*;
- beginning with a downward curve (‘\’) the small oval letters like *a d g q o c*;
- containing a lower loop like *y g p r z q f*.



From *Palmer Method Cursive Writing*  
 Grade 6 teachers edition 1976  
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 publisher

Lefthanded writers may find that if they use the generally recommended position shown diagrammatically, they cover with their writing hand the letters and words they have just written. Because of this lefties cannot look back on their writing. One lefthanded person resolved the dilemma by inventing his own system. He pulls his paper down by the left hand bottom corner so that the bottom edge forms at least a 50 degree angle with the table edge. He writes uphill making it possible for him to write most legibly and at the same time see the letters coming from beneath his pen without arching his hand in the upside-down position many lefthanded writers adopt. Given the uncertain state of knowledge about lefthanded writing, perhaps the logical course to follow is to show lefthanded youngsters the traditional position. If that proves to be unwieldy and troublesome, then children should experiment to find a position that serves them best.

**Providing Meaningful Practice.** Having systematically introduced the lower- and upper-case letters, a teacher will want to provide continued and meaningful practice with the elements of cursive writing in the transitional and then in the adult style. Many of the activities

described earlier in the manuscript section apply equally to cursive, upper graders can prepare duplicating masters, observational charts word cards, labels, and so forth. They can write and send letters invitations, and greeting cards. In addition they can experiment with some of the following activities:

- 1 Young people write and send notes to one another. From half gallon milk containers, the teacher fashions a series of pigeonholes, one for each student. Students label their pigeonholes into which others including the teacher tuck notes, papers being returned special assignments.
- 2 Upper graders compose nature haikus and cinquains, which they copy in their best cursive onto pieces of brown paper bag, ripped to form jagged edges. The poems are taken outside, attached with twine to trees and shrubs, and left to weather. They truly become 'nature poems.' The weathered poems are collected and mounted on a bulletin board captioned Nature's Handiwork.
- 3 Students transfer original haikus and cinquains to tracing paper writing as clearly as they can. They mount the thin paper onto colored paper. If the pieces were written as a reaction to colors, the effect will not only be striking but also will help communicate the message of the poems.
- 4 Obtain old wallpaper sample books from a wallpaper store. A student who has written a poem selects a page from the sample book that has the same mood as the poem, cuts a rectangle from the page, writes the poem on it, and mounts the piece on a larger sheet of dark construction paper to which he/she adds designs cut from the remainder of the sample page.
- 5 Mount a striking picture on a portion of the bulletin board. Beneath place a table that holds a collection of poetry anthologies, index cards, and colored folders. Children go to the Matching Poetry to Pictures Center and search the anthologies for a poem they feel belongs with the picture. They write it in clear cursive on an index card and place the card in a box nearby. At the end of the week children read their cards to the class, and everyone decides which poem matches most perfectly. The chosen card is stapled to the picture, others are stapled around it. Each week a new picture can be added to the board so that there are always two pictures on display, the new one and the one from the week before.
- 6 Scrolls are fun to write, correlate nicely with some social science content, and provide opportunity for meaningful handwriting practice. Scrolls were used in ancient times as a way of sending messages and even in more recent times as a way of inscribing proclamations. Children studying colonial America can write pseudo proclamations such as those that could have been written the day after the Boston Tea Party or those that announced the Stamp Tax Act. Children studying ancient Greece and Rome can write proclamations that could have been read before the governing councils. Proclamations are written out in cursive on the unwaxed side of shelf paper, the ends of the paper are attached to dowels,

and the proclamation is delivered as part of a class "We Are There" happening. Through this type of activity, as in the others described above, children are using their growing skill in handwriting as a tool for self-expression.

7. Preparing an illustrated story "movie" is a pleasant way to practice cursive. A student who has written a short story divides it into five or six episodes. The writer enscribes each episode on a separate piece of white lined paper, mounts the paper off-center on a sheet of construction paper, and draws an illustration on the construction paper. The writer-illustrator then tapes all the pages produced in this manner into a strip that he/she feeds through the opaque projector to share with listening classmates.
8. Older students may be interested in experimenting with the ways English has been written down in the past. Encourage them to try writing in the style used during the colonial period. *Jennifer, Hecate, Macbeth, William McKinley, and Me, Elizabeth* by Elaine Konigsburg contains a sample writers can use as a model upon which to concoct their own versions. Sixth graders may enjoy playing with calligraphy with all its flourishes. Most libraries own a book or two showing how to write with much style.
9. Engage upper graders in two related investigations: the way letters are written in different writing systems and the derivations of the letters used in English today. Children will enjoy trying to form Japanese and Chinese characters, particularly as ornamentation to haikus. They can go on to find out about cuniform writing, hieroglyphics, and the Cyrillic alphabet.

Most of the activities described above provide practice either as part of ongoing classroom activity or as follow-up to written expression, science activity, or social science study. As in the lower grades, the best practice is repeated use in real classroom situations. In addition, there may be call for more direct practice, especially as fifth graders change over to adult cursive and as students discover weaknesses through continued self-evaluation. To facilitate the change to adult cursive, young people use paper without a central guideline and with lines about 38" apart, the same as the legal-size yellow tablets in common use. Young people systematically practice lower-case letters from each of the letter groups, working on the letters with undercurve beginnings, downcurve beginnings, upper loops, lower loops; they work on the upper-case letters as well. In similar fashion, young people work on special weaknesses identified by studying samples of their own cursive.

Students can check the legibility of individual letter shapes by punching a hole about one centimeter in diameter in a card; they place the hole on top of a sample of each letter as it appears in their written expression. By masking out all other letters, the evaluator can get a better idea of the clarity of individual letters. Failing to close up letters like a, o, and d is a common problem that can cause confusion and that students can identify by close checking through a masking hole.

Is writing legible? is the ultimate criterion to apply in judging handwriting. At all levels but particularly in the middle and junior high

school grades students express their individuality through their handwriting. To insist that young people practice to the point where letters are perfect duplicates of the models in a handwriting system is often to ask the impossible and generally to ask the unnecessary. Students above grade five will need to refine skills periodically to insure continued legibility but after a point individual styling will and should become an important factor in handwriting.

### **Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills**

- Devise a plan for introducing the small oval letters that begin with a downward curve. Remember to include practice with words as well as with letters.
- Devise a creative activity through which students can practice their cursive handwriting. Try to integrate the handwriting activity with some other area in the language arts program. Try it with a group.

### **Acquiring the Writing Tools—A Summary Thought or Two**

To write effectively people must be able to create the ideas that are the substance of expression. Without ideas to be expressed there is little need to write. For this reason most writing programs have rightfully stressed idea development—ways to encourage children to enter the world of the imagination, ways to encourage children to think about and react to the real world of people, places, and things they meet directly or vicariously through books, films, and tapes.

But to possess ideas is not enough as people communicate through writing. To write effectively people must be able to manipulate language on paper, especially if ideas are to be given more than passing attention by others. Others judge ideas based on the words selected to express them, on the way those words are spelled, and even on the appearance of the ideas on paper. Spelling and handwriting are part of the writing conventions to be mastered if people are to perform adequately in everyday living, business transactions, and school and college work.

Spelling, handwriting, and dictionary skills are fundamental writing tools that children should acquire within language arts programs in elementary grades. Schools are concerned about developing children's ability to

- write clear manuscript in which letters generally conform with accepted conventions regarding size, slant, shape, spacing, line strength, and styling.
- write a legible form of cursive starting in grade three.
- handle regular sound-symbol relationships.
- spell words that do not adhere to the regularities inherent in the English sound-symbol system.
- spell multisyllabic words constructed from suffixes, prefixes, and roots.

- spell compound words,
- select the homonym necessary in a particular context,
- arrange words in alphabetical order and locate words ordered alphabetically,
- use the dictionary to check spelling, find a substitute for an over-worked word, check word meaning, determine pronunciation, and
- use other dictionary-type references for special purposes

These are fundamental goals of language arts instruction starting in early primary grades and continuing through elementary school. At times teachers focus on a particular skill, at many other times they devise learning opportunities for children that integrate specific spelling, handwriting, and dictionary work into learning experiences in the subject-content areas.

A final caveat may be in order. Since ideas are at the heart of written communication, the process of recording ideas on paper should not block expression. Stopping midway in a thought to check spelling or word meaning in the dictionary, writing slowly and carefully so that *os*, *as*, and *ds* are tightly closed to prevent misinterpretation, struggling to find a precise word — these may cause writers to lose the thought they are trying to express. The time for concern about dictionary checking, spelling, and handwriting is not in midthought, rather it is afterthought as writers go back to freshen and dress up what they have written. This is something to remember. As children compose and write down stories, poems, reports, and scripts, teachers should *not* remind them to watch their spelling and write in their best handwriting. Later is the time for checking spelling, erasing to correct a letter or word. Later is the time for writing in clearly styled handwriting as children select several pieces for sharing with others who will read what they have written. To turn a creative writing experience into a handwriting or spelling test is possibly to take the creativity out of the experience.

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## Developing reading skills— making print a language they know

There was a book lying near Alice on the table and while she sat watching the White King she turned over the leaves to find some part she could read — for it's all in some language I don't know, she said to herself

*Through the Looking Glass*

It was a crisp Monday morning. The sixteen kindergartners gathered — as was their daily custom — along the perimeter of the bright red rug that set off the talk-center of their large classroom.

Attendance checking followed the flag salute and the song sing. Pointing and calling numbers, the little ones counted heads around the circle, reaching sixteen and knowing that there were eighteen in the class, they decided two were absent and identified their missing classmates. Then Ms. Wilkening recorded the date — Monday, March 8 — in the corner of the chalkboard — a date the little ones read aloud with her. At that point the teacher gestured toward a chart posted on the bulletin board that contained a listing of six words: *milk, paper, blinds, Fluffy, plants, chairs*. "Let's decide who will help with classroom tasks this week," she suggested. Boys and girls volunteered to feed Fluffy, the class pet, to help water the plants, and so forth. Next to the appropriate word on the chart, Ms. Wilkening listed the names of two volunteers, and the entire class "read" back the completed chart so all would remember their tasks.

**Reading and Talking Together.** Several books in hand, the teacher now settled down in a rocking chair at the front of the red rug. "Boys and girls," she announced, "this morning we are going to read a story about two big animals, a hippopotamus and a rhinoceros. Let's look first in the encyclopedia to see what these animals are like." She opened a large book to display a picture of a hippopotamus. The children, prompted by a question or two, described the animal. Then they examined a large-sized encyclopedia picture of a rhinoceros, again describing it, especially its nose. Encouraged by their teacher, they compared the nose of the rhinoceros to the hippo's. They talked about the rhino's horn, considered possible uses of it, and expressed their opinions of it.

Then the teacher read the story *You Look Ridiculous, Said the Rhinoceros to the Hippopotamus*. Each time before the hippo repeated the question "Do I look ridiculous?" the teacher looked up at the class, and shortly the students, anticipating the story question, joined in the repetition. When the story ended, the children talked about incidents they liked best and about why all the other animals thought the hippo looked ridiculous. They talked about times they had wanted things other boys and girls had. Soon *ridiculous rhinoceros hippopotamus* were tripping off the children's tongues as they talked together.

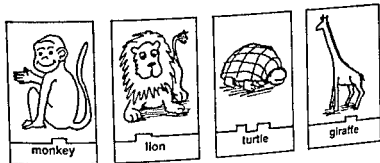
→  
working with written words

→  
developing meaningful  
concepts

→  
getting a feel for story  
structures



**Pantomiming Meanings** Because the little ones had been sitting for more than fifteen minutes Ms Wilkening sequenced in an active time. The children stood up in open areas of classroom space and to the accompaniment of a recording of Saint Saens' *Carnival of the Animals* pantomimed the way the animals in the story just heard must have moved about. To prompt the activity Ms Wilkening had pasted photocopied story pictures on cardboard pieces. As she held up the elephant picture the children became elephants; seeing the monkey picture they became monkeys. Returning to the communication circle the youngsters each received an animal picture or a naming card cut out as a puzzle to fit into the animal card.



← acquiring skill in describing changes

Youngsters holding picture cards had to pair themselves with those holding naming cards to put puzzles together. Finding a mate, each pair of youngsters laid out their puzzle on the rug, and all as a group then named each animal pictured before them. As a youngster picked up the cards, Ms Wilkening pointed to a table where students could go in pairs to put the puzzles together and read the animal names.

**Hearing Similar Sounds** This active time merged into a thinking and listening time. At the top of a piece of charting paper, the teacher wrote the word *ridiculous*. Today she announced, 'we're going to think about words that begin with the same sound as *ridiculous*. Let's pull on our thinking caps.' The children put their hands to their heads and pretended to pull on thinking caps. As they did so, under a lower case 'r' written on the chart, Ms Wilkening recorded *rain* as she said it. The children repeated *rain* and *ridiculous* and soon were contributing words with the same beginning sound: *red*, *rabbit*, *road*, *right*. When they could not think of another word, the teacher encouraged, 'I'm thinking of a little animal just a little bigger than a mouse. It eats cheese.' With this clue, the children produced *rat*. Or she encouraged, 'Who in our class has a name that begins just as *rabbit* does?' With this, they produced *Robert* and *Richard*, which she recorded under an upper case 'R'. When they had produced numbers of words, the children cooperatively composed a rabbit story with individual children contributing sentences from the brainstormed words. Their story went something like this:

← as they hear the sound represented by r

### The Ridiculous Rat

The rabbit saw a red rat The rat was sitting by the road The rabbit said to the red rat, "You look ridiculous You are red and you look ridiculous "

learning to recognize words in context

As children contributed sentences, Ms Wilkening recorded them on experience charting paper mounted on an easel Whenever the teacher reached the end of a sentence, one child came forward to add the period Once the story was composed and written out, the children read it together with their teacher, who followed the lines from left to right with her finger as children read They read it several times, working on speaking the words in "chunks" of meaning and changing tone of voice to express meaning In so doing, they read the last line with so much feeling that Ms Wilkening substituted an exclamation mark for the final period "to show how to read it " Then individual children came up to the chart to read lines, as the teacher's moving finger indicated clusters of words to be read as units

reconstructing story sentences

**Reading Writing.** Quickly the teacher took scissors and cut the story chart into punctuation marks and into clusters of words read as units She clipped the first sentence between *The rabbit saw* and *a red rat*, the second between *The rabbit was sitting* and *by the road* Then she distributed the pieces to the students "Let's see if we can find story words that are the same as the ones on our charting list Who has a piece that has *rat* on it?" she asked, pointing to the word *rat* on the brainstormed list Those holding a piece with *rat* came forward to hold their pieces next to that word on the list as others checked to see if the two were actually the same When all possible matings had been discovered and checked, the children with much teacher guidance reconstructed the story from the cards Ms Wilkening called forward the two holding parts of the first sentence They decided which of the two parts went first, which second, laying the parts side by-side on the rug and reading the sentence Youngsters holding parts of successive sentences did the same until the entire story was back together again

distilling the sound represented by r—reinforcing what has been learned

**Listening for More Sounds** At that point the teacher distributed to each kindergartner a card inscribed *r* She announced, "Boys and girls I'm going to call out words Some will begin with the same sound as *rabbit*, *rat*, *ridiculous* some will not When you hear a word that begins with the same sound hold up your card What letter is on the card?"

The unison response was "r" "Yes," the teacher continued, "the letter *r* We use the letter *r* to write the sound we hear at the beginning of *rat* and *rabbit* Point to another word on our chart that has the letter *r* at the beginning Several children hopped up to point out words but two — John and Sylvia — were obviously not attending As others were coming forward to point, Ms Wilkening said, 'I like the way Gilda is paying attention Let's all pay attention in the same way'

When all were back in their seats, Ms Wilkening began the word call Hearing words like *rabbit* and *rat*, the youngsters held up their *r* cards Hearing ones not beginning in the same way they lowered their cards

Words used included *Ralph, home, baby, race, rain, ride, lion, boat, man*  
*and*

**Developing Number Concepts.** A fast finger-play came next, one the children loved to repeat "There were ten little \_\_\_\_\_ in the bed, and the little one said, 'Roll over!' Roll over!" They all rolled over and then there were nine and the little one said "On previous occasions children had done the play with Indians, lions, bunnies. Now they did it with ten little rabbits. The youngsters stood up, sang together, held up fingers to show the number of rabbits left in the bed, and rolled their arms to show the rabbit motion "Did anyone hear any other words in the song," the teacher asked upon completion of the play, "that begin with the same sound as rabbit?" The children knew the answer and called out the word grouping *roll over* in the same rhythm they had used in singing it

developing meaningful concepts as a base for reading and thinking

**Reading the Numbers** "We did that very nicely!" I really liked the way John and Sylvia were listening and doing. John and Sylvia were the youngsters previously not attending, so Ms. Wilkening wanted now to reinforce their positive behavior "Do you remember your numbers?" Quickly she distributed numbers from 1 to 10 to students who moved forward to lay out the cards in numerical order as the others called out the numbers. Then pointing to the numbers in sequence, the teacher led the singing of an original version of "Ten Little Indians. 1 little, 2 little, 3 little rabbits, 4 little, 5 little, 6 little rabbits, 7 little, 8 little, 9 little rabbits, 10 little rabbits are here." At that point next to the number cards, the teacher displayed word cards for each number (*one, two, etc.*) gave a pointer to one child to point to the number words as they sang, and led the class in a "resinging." A second child took a turn pointing out the number words as the class sang again. Then the teacher took away the number cards leaving only the number word cards on the rug to use as a guide during the singing. Gathering the word cards, Ms. Wilkening distributed them to the youngsters. "Let's see if we can begin to recognize the number words and put them in order," she said. Around the room other cards hung that bore numbers and number words. As children ran into trouble, they looked up to compare their word cards with those. Soon the word cards were in order.

learning to recognize the number words by sight

**Refining Skills** The kindergartners and their teacher had been engrossed for almost 40 minutes. Action had been fast with numerous changes in activity to keep the attention of the little ones. Now Ms. Wilkening held up and explained a sheet all would complete independently and then she divided the class into work groups. Some would go immediately to a table where they would complete the exercise sheet, circling words that began the same way as the word *rain* written at the top of the page. Some began on an art project—painting stones to look like rabbits and painting a *r* on the bottom under the supervision of a classroom mother, who had come to help. Others worked at another table drawing a picture on the reverse side of their *r* card of something beginning with the same sound as *rabbit* and *rat*. These cards would be shared during the

language together session on Tuesday morning with others guessing the object and word represented

Four youngsters worked with their teacher on a skill they needed. These slower learners were having continuing trouble in visually discriminating letters comprised of similar shapes. As they watched, Lorraine Wilkening drew on a paper letter groups such as h r r r, m n n m, h h n h. The children pointed out the different letter in each group. Later they changed positions in the room to work at other tables so all eventually got to complete the exercise sheet and to talk with Ms. Wilkening. Several met individually with her to dictate patterned stories or to read stories they had previously dictated. For example, Mary Jo dictated an original ridiculous story.

The monkey looks ridiculous. He has a long tail. The lion looks ridiculous. He has a big mane. The leopard looks ridiculous. He has spots.

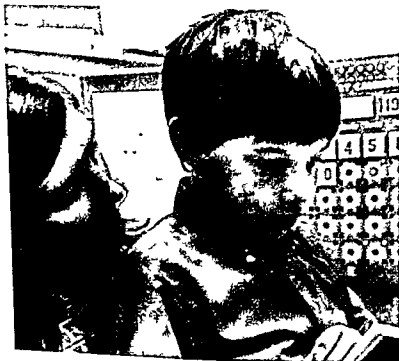
Having reread the story to her teacher, Mary Jo illustrated it and then took it over to a group of working classmates to read it to them.

Ruth, a very gifted kindergartner, read aloud to Ms. Wilkening a portion of a pre-primer that she had been reading on her own and explained why she liked that story. Having read to Ms. Wilkening, Ruth went off to share it with those at the art table. In this setting, Ruth, Mary Jo, and the others in the class were finding it very easy "to take more of reading."

### Getting Ready to Read

Oral language activity is a means not only of developing skill in listening and expressing but it also lays the foundation for beginning reading.

Personalized reading  
instruction in primary  
grades



Story listening and telling, singing oral composition, talking together, oral play with words, numbers, and ideas, dramatizing, puppet play, choral speaking, finger plays, pantomime, and art prepare children for eventual reading. As Dallmann (1976, p. 235) points out, "It is highly important that, during the period of a child's life preceding that when he begins to read, the teacher recognizes the interrelationship of the language arts. This point holds whether the child in his infancy or upon entrance to first grade or later in his school life is first taught to read. Development of skill in listening and growth in ability to express himself orally are important to reading instruction regardless of the age of the learner." From this perspective, all activities occurring in active kindergarten and first grades are essentially pre-reading in that they get children ready to read.

In addition, some kinds of oral and visual activities can be structured relating directly to reading processes. In this section we will consider reading-related activities generally deemed important in developing reading readiness. Many of these activities we have seen in action in Ms. Wilken's fast-paced kindergarten — activities to develop visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, knowledge of letter names, left to right progression, and perception of the relationship between spoken and written words.

**Visual Discrimination.** To be able to read, children must be able to recognize similarities and differences among shapes, letters, and even words. This is what is meant by *visual discrimination*. Given a letter series, such as s s e s or t l l l, children are able to pick the one that is different, the ones that are the same.

Many reading series include booklets with exercises to develop visual discrimination. In printed exercises students match letters in a row similar to an initial one, cross out the letter not like others in a row, circle two words in a row that are the same, or draw a line connecting matching pairs of words. In most cases, booklets are to be used in interactive situations with the teacher presenting each direction orally, children following the directions, and then teacher and children talking about similarities and differences perceived. One obvious advantage of this type of early activity booklet is that children are working with their own books held in their own hands, and are beginning to see how a book is organized. They start at the front, work across pages from left to right and top to bottom, and begin to use pictures as part of the written message.

In addition, the teacher can and should develop many similar kinds of activities as part of meaning-filled interaction. Kindergarten teachers who organize an initial talking-and-doing time similar to Ms. Wilken's, can distribute cards, several of which bear the same shaped figures. The students lay out the cards on the conversation rug, matching cards with similar shapes. Soon they match cards bearing the same lower-case letters, upper-case letters, or words. On other occasions each participant receives a card bearing a letter of the alphabet. As the teacher displays letter cards, players point to the person holding the card with the same letter as that displayed. Similarly, as children are introduced to new word cards, they compare them to labels on classroom objects, seeing if they can find a label similar to a word card they hold in hand.

Read Donald Bremme and Frederick Erickson "Relation of Verbal and Nonverbal Classroom Behaviors" *Theory into Practice* 16 (June 1977) 153-61. The authors describe a kindergarten "First Circle."

**Auditory Discrimination.** To be able to read, children must be able to recognize similarities and differences in language sounds. This is what is meant by *auditory discrimination*. Given the words *pen, hen, ten*, children hear a difference. Much reading readiness activity in kindergarten and first grade focuses on hearing initial consonant and rhyming sounds.

Practice with the sounds of language can easily be integrated with ongoing class work, especially encounters with stories, poems, and songs. Ms. Wilkening used the word *ridiculous* from the Wabber story and the word *rabbit* in the fingerplay to involve children with /r/. Many other stories and poems serve equally well. "One Misty, Moisty Morning" (see page 162) is ideal, for example, in play with words that begin just like *misty*. Likewise, a variation of the old Mother Goose rhyme and dance "Now We Dance Lucy, Lucy, Lucy" is an engaging context for introducing other *lucy* words such as *look, listen, like*. This rhyme leads also to active physical involvement in the meanings.

Now we dance lucy, lucy, lucy,  
Now we dance lucy, lucy, light

Shake your right hand in  
Turn yourself all about  
Now we dance lucy, lucy, lucy  
Now we dance lucy, lucy, light

Shake your right hand in  
Shake your left hand in  
Turn yourself all about  
Now we dance lucy, lucy, lucy  
Now we dance lucy, lucy, light

On each successive repetition, students add another line and action. Shake your right foot in, Shake your left foot in, Shake your head in too. On other playings *lucy, lucy, light* may become *hippy, hippy, high* or *racy, racy, right*, depending on the sound being emphasized.

Many singing rhymes can be adapted so children play with beginning consonant sounds. 'Farmer in the Dell' is a case in point. Playing with /f/, children can invent variations such as

The farmer finds a fox The farmer finds a fox  
Heigh ho the merry o' The farmer finds a fox

With stress on /b/, the rhyme becomes

The boy buys a bike The boy buys a bike  
Heigh ho, the merry o' The boy buys a bike

And with stress on /t/, it becomes

The tiger ties his tail The tiger ties his tail  
Heigh ho, the merry o' The tiger ties his tail

In much the same manner, familiar rhymes can help children hear rhyming sounds. For example, the teacher might read "Twinkle,

Additional lines:  
The lion has the lamb  
The hen has a house  
The neighbor needs a name  
The mouse meets the man  
The dog does a dance

twinkle, little star / How I wonder what you \_\_\_\_\_ "  
 Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall / Humpty Dumpty had a great  
 \_\_\_\_\_ "Three little kittens / lost their \_\_\_\_\_ ' Less  
 familiar rhymes are useful too as part of an oral languaging together

time  
 Good night  
 Sleep light  
 Wake up bright  
 In the morning light  
 To do what s night  
 With all your might

Cut thistles in May,  
 They grow in a day  
 Cut them in June  
 That is too soon  
 Cut them in July,  
 Then they will die

Playful activities such as these are used in conjunction with more structured ones. Teachers can display pictures of objects whose names begin with the same initial consonant sound *radio, rope, rabbit*. Children decide on the name that goes with each picture and then decide which objects in other pictures on display have names starting with the same sound. Later on, they work from stacks of picture cards, matching those whose names begin the same way. As children play at consonant sounds, they begin to contribute similarly sounding words that come to mind.

With rhyming sounds, the teacher says sets of three words from which youngsters select two having the same rhyming sound, or she calls out a lengthy list of words *pen, ten, dog, hen, lap, when, hat, men*. Whenever a word rhymes with *Ben*, children raise their *en* cards in response. Riddling with rhymes requires equally close listening to sounds. The teacher begins, "I rhyme with *cat*. I am used to hitting balls. Who am I?" Children who have responded to teacher's riddling rhymes invent others with the same sound to ask classmates.

**Letter Recognition and Naming.** As background for reading, young children need to become familiar with the 26 letters that individually or in combination represent the English sound system, to relate upper and lower case forms, and to attach names to letters. In early primary grades familiarity is gained through immersion in an environment where letters and words fill every visible space and are used on a continuing basis. Thus in Ms. Wilkening's kindergarten, each day's activities focus on a letter or letter grouping. One day is *J j* day or *Jack's* day — named after a student in the class, another *W w* day or *Mrs. Wilkening's* day, and still another *Z z* day, or *zero* day, when no one in the class has a name written down with a letter being studied. On *Jack's* day *J j* appears on the chalkboard, which becomes a learning station where kindergartners go to write and rewrite the capital and lower-case forms. On *J j* day, too, children enjoy the playing and singing of "Oh Where, Oh Where Has Our Little *j* Gone?" — a variation of the old "Oh Where, Oh Where Has Our Little Dog Gone?" Since Ms. Wilkening introduces this letter-play very early in the year, the children in her class know the pattern. They help their teacher create a singing rhyme that includes the letter shape. Then as classmates sing and resing the rhyme, individuals search the letter wall, on which capital and lower-case letters and words have been mounted higgledy-piggledy, pointing out other samples of the letter in question.

Working with j and a, these youngsters and their teacher invented

Oh where, oh where has our little j gone?  
Oh where, oh where can it be?  
With its dot on top and its tail below  
Oh where, oh where can it be?

Oh where, oh where has our little a gone?  
Oh where oh where can it be?  
With its circle around and its stick beside  
Oh where oh where can it be?

It is relatively easy to create more stanzas to sing while searching for other letters

Work with letter shapes and names correlates clearly with handwriting activity. Many activities described in chapter 10 provide practice in letter recognition: writing letters in sand, crayoning letters on large pieces of newspaper, skipping along giant-sized letter shapes outlined on the playground, playing musical letters with large-sized letter cut-outs. Clearly too, oral dictation of stories both individually and in groups can serve to relate names and letters. The teacher, recording for children, can simply ask 'What letter is this one that I have just written down?' or 'Who wants to draw a j at the beginning of the word *jump* in our story?'

Some youngsters will require additional practice, perhaps in special purpose skill groups that the teacher puts together on a temporary basis. A small group may match capital and lower-case letter cards or complete exercise sheets in which they circle all the capital Vs in a row. They may shake up a handful of letter cubes with faces bearing letter forms and call out the names of letters that fall face up. Larger groups enjoy a bingo play in which they make up bingo cards with letters taken from the higgledy-piggledy letter wall and place tokens on the letters chosen as a fellow student announces letters selected at random from a hat.

A Bingo Card

|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | t | l | s | x | R |
| 2 | C | M | V | X | L |
| 3 | r | S | Z | A | T |
| 4 | b | g | a | y | w |
| 5 | m | G | N | B | O |

**Left-to-Right, Top-to-Bottom Progression** As with letter recognition, ability to handle left to-right sequence can develop as part of other classroom language activities. Dictating ideas to their teacher, they watch as he/she records words moving from left to right across the paper and then downward. Later children read back words they have dictated, following the teacher's hand as it guides the way across



the page line after line. Drawing stories with more than one major incident is helpful too. Children can draw a three or four part story on horizontal strips of paper folded into frames and numbered 1 2 3 4 from left to right. Laying out number or word cards on floor or table they sequence the cards from left to right.

At times too it is possible to stress left to right and top-to-bottom progression as children participate in singing and choral reading. Introducing a song such as Row Row Row Your Boat to early primaries the teacher can start with a large sized song chart on which are printed the song words. The teacher can use a pointer in the manner of the bouncing ball of tv sing-alongs keeping the rhythm by marking off clusters of words as children sing them and at the same time leading eyes from left to right. Although kindergartners are really not reading words they are developing the notion that writing on paper represents what they are singing and that words go from left to right.

**Vocabulary Development as Part of Readiness.** Words are symbols to which people have assigned meaning. To read words and understand what those words are saying youngsters must have begun to associate meaning with a vast range of word symbols. The more extensive the meanings they associate with particular symbols the fuller is their understanding of passages later met on the printed page.

**Story Experiences.** For this reason oral story activity through which children enlarge their functional vocabulary is an essential component of any reading or reading readiness program. The child hearing *Yo! Look Ridiculous Said the Rhinoceros* probably will develop a full-blown concept of *ridiculous*. The child hearing Remy Charlip's *Fortunately in which every other page starts Fortunately* and alternate pages start *Unfortunately* begins to perceive the contrasting meanings embodied in the two words and to know how these words pattern in sentences. The child enjoying the words and pictures of Tomie de Paola's *Strega Nona* will probably come away with a fuller concept of *pasta*. Talking about a story after listening to it children will begin to use story words especially if the teacher consciously contributes the words to discussion and questions. What is the most ridiculous thing you have ever seen? What kinds of pasta do we eat? The story says *Unfortunately there was a hole in the parachute. Why was that unfortunate?* Dictating stories children may draw on those just discussed and to which they are beginning to attach considerable meaning as a result of story listening and talking. This is especially true where dictations parallel stories heard: children dictate their original pasta stories fortunately/unfortunately stories *Yo! Look Ridiculous* stories.

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1 | one   |
| 2 | two   |
| 3 | three |

a book like Lionni's *Little Blue and Little Yellow*. Children draw blue, green, black pictures — crayoning everything in their drawings with the appropriate color. On a colorless day, the color labels may come down to be rehung by children who are beginning to associate names with colors around them.

Number concepts can be developed in much the same manner, with children counting everything in sight — including themselves. They sing number songs, sequence the numbers, do fingerplays with numbers, and eventually match numbers and number words. The teacher contributes purposefully to the development of number concepts by bringing numbers into everyday activities of classroom living. "I want two children to care for Fluffy this week," Ms. Wilkening announced that Monday morning, and two names were listed on the chart.

Relational concepts embodied in words such as *up, down, here, there, left, right, now, then, in, out, above, below, around, through, by, on, at* need to be developed to prepare children for reading and for functioning smoothly in the world. This is especially true of youngsters whose first language is Spanish, since in Spanish *in, on, at* are interchangeable. Nonverbal expression of meanings is helpful here, with the teacher directing children who have heard a story about where a boy walked to demonstrate nonverbally. Children can pantomime the meanings of sentences in which the only difference is that shown by a relational word as in *The horse pranced around the rug. The horse pranced across the rug. The horse pranced by the rug.* They can carry out directions differing in only one word: *Put the nut into the desk. Put it on the desk. Put it by the desk. Put it under the desk.* Nursery rhymes with directional words can be selected for interpretation as body chants. Children reciting "Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water," for example, can make upward climbing motions, and those reciting "Jack fell down and broke his crown, and Jill brought home the water," can make falling down motions.

**Conservation.** Recently reading specialists have proposed a relationship between a child's ability to *conserve* — that is, to perceive that an object maintains its own identity when subjected to clearly apparent transformations — and the child's readiness for reading. A child who can conserve, for example, realizes that regardless of the shape or size of the container into which a volume of water is poured, the amount of water remains the same. According to Piaget, ability to conserve is not a cognitive characteristic of the very young child functioning in the pre-operational stage; it is a characteristic of the child who, at about age 6 or 7, has moved into the concrete operational stage of mental development.

Mary Cox (1976, p. 257) summarizes relationships between ability to conserve and ability to read: "To succeed in a conservation task, a child has to be able to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant stimuli, in order to succeed in reading, the child must differentiate distinctive features of letters so that correct responses can be made to the symbols. Once this has occurred, the child can learn the rules for the construction of meaningful units."

A sorting activity group  
objects into piles based  
first on one characteristic  
then on a different one —

If the hypotheses of the theorists are valid, then sorting and labeling tasks requiring children to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant stimuli should be part of reading readiness programs. These tasks include sorting dissimilar objects first into groups based on color, then on shape, then on size. As groupings are differentiated, youngsters label them — the red group, the yellow, the flat, the long. Blocks specially designed for this type of activity are now available commercially, but teachers can collect materials to use in similar fashion, and children can think through classifying relationships as part of oral language-together times. Pictures of concrete objects from mathematics, random objects — all can be commandeered for this purpose by teachers who are trying to help young children move from pre-operational to concrete-operational thinking. The teacher might pick a picture or object from a miscellaneous collection displayed on the Composing Stage, asking, "Let's pick a picture that is in some way like the one I am holding." Of the child who proffers a similar one, the teacher queries, "How is your picture like mine, Sue?" Following Sue's response, the teacher continues, "Is there another picture that is like Sue's and mine because it has a dog in it?" Soon children will have a group labeled "dog pictures." Later they may put together and label "car pictures," "bicycle pictures," and "girl pictures."

**Individual Differences in Reading Readiness** All children do not need equal attention to visual and auditory aspects of language, some come to school perceiving differences in shapes and sounds. Some know letter names and have an extensive oral vocabulary built up through wide experiences with words and objects. In contrast, others come with only limited experiences, little knowledge of letters, and little skill in distinguishing sounds and shapes. Some come with a combination of abilities. One youngster may know the letters and be able to distinguish shapes, but because of a slight hearing problem or a language different home background may have trouble differentiating sounds.

In determining what kinds of readiness activities are particularly needed by individual children, teachers of early primary find that the information supplied by reading readiness, vision, and hearing tests to be an invaluable supplement to information obtained by observing children engaged in classroom activity. The *Gates MacGinitie Reading Readiness Test* (T. C. Press) and *The Metropolitan Reading Tests* (Harcourt) both provide data on children's ability to discriminate sounds and discriminate shapes, letters, and words. They also supply a measure of children's ability to follow directions. Vision and hearing impairments may be identified by tests administered by specialists.

In addition, the teacher can appraise children's readiness by setting up activities and exercises in which children are asked to

- circle the one picture in a series or the one letter in a series that is different,
- identify the one word in a series that does not rhyme with others or starts with a different sound than others
- supply words that start with the same sound as a given one or that rhyme with a given one,

- supply the number, color, or relational word that describes objects on display They are red They are under the table There are six,
- recognize the names for letters and numbers

Such diagnostic exercises can be part of classroom oral languaging times and lead directly into further activities that build and refine specific reading readiness skills

### **Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills**

- Starting from a familiar rhyme or song, create an original verse that would reinforce one particular language sound Share it with a group of children
- Devise an activity and accompanying materials you could use to develop visual discrimination as part of an oral languaging-together time Or devise materials to use in developing familiarity with letter names

### **Developing Word Attack Skills**

Five major skills are important in the development of readers who can independently "attack" words in reading 1 growth in sight vocabulary, 2 ability to use context to derive meaning, 3 ability to decode the sound/symbol code, 4 ability to analyze the structure of words, and 5 ability to use the dictionary to discover pronunciation and meaning In the past, there has been controversy over which one of these skills is the most vital, especially to the young reader Some specialists have advocated a look-see method with most words learned by repetition and recognized on sight, while others have advocated a phonics approach with words being decoded through applications of sound-symbol relationships Still others have opted for an experiential approach with children learning to read through meeting words in reading materials they themselves have written or dictated

Today, however, it is rare to find a reading teacher wedded to one approach to the total exclusion of others An eclectic approach that relies on developing a sight vocabulary, contextual skills phonics skills, structural analysis skills, and dictionary skills seems to be the wisest course when faced with children of widely differing abilities, learning styles, and interests As Lou Burmeister has written (1975, p 3), "A flexible approach is desirable Some words can be recognized at sight easily — those that are meaningful to the reader, those that have distinctive shapes, and those that the reader has seen often in print" In addition, "The independent reader must somehow attack other words — including each word he is seeing in print for the first time" But phonics by itself is not enough In Burmeister's words "Phonics doesn't always work, and it is time consuming Although it is fine to use phonics clues when necessary constant use of phonics leads to tediousness in reading"

**Building a Sight Vocabulary Through Meaning-filled Use.** Words met over and over again in print should eventually be recognized on sight. This is as true for the beginning reader as it is for the adult who is reading words encountered so many times before, that he/she barely looks at individual ones but rather focuses on clusters of words that convey units of meaning, clusters such as *through the window, the wicked witch, When he came*. As people become more skilled as readers, more and more words are recognized on sight.

Burns (1976) cautions that "A teacher must carefully choose which words to teach as sight words" and recommends a sight word reading vocabulary inclusive of irregularly spelled words (*the, of, to two*) and frequently used, regularly spelled words (*at, it, and, am go*) with words learned as sight words being extremely useful and meaningful ones. Early primary teachers employ numerous creative techniques that help children acquire a repertoire of sight words through meaning-filled use. This use can occur through —

- 1 **Classroom Labels** Naming cards (*sink, mirror, window door, light, wall*) can be placed throughout the classroom to be seen and seen again and used in composing class stories. Young children's desks are labeled with their names. *Left* and *right, top* and *bottom* can be printed on the appropriate locations along the chalkboard. Arrows pointing inward and labeled *in*, others pointing outward and labeled *out* can be posted next to a classroom cubicle. Creative teachers will have little trouble finding places to post signs reading *up, down, on over, under, I, me, you, it*. In upper grades more sophisticated labels (*portal light fixture chalk trough windowpane*) take the place of these basic ones and are a means of extending children's contact with words.
- 2 **Dates** Each day the teacher writes the date on the board. Teacher and children read it together.
- 3 **Picture Stories** Children and teacher compose stories containing a basic sight word or two and pictures that substitute for other words in the sentence that children do not yet know. For example, a "story" can begin



Children compose additional lines in their own "I go" stories by repeating those words and adding pictures that tell where. Later the teacher can place words next to children's pictures. Stories should be shared.

- 4 **Classroom Charts** Charts used on a continuing basis provide meaningful repetitions of basic words. Charts of daily class events, house keeping chores, class "officers" upcoming holidays, school

See Lou E. Burns et al.  
Words - From Print to  
Meaning (Reading Mass  
Addison Wesley 1975) for  
this kind of activity

- events should contain labels that remain from week to week with only specific names changing
- 5 **Song Charts** Songs like "Happy Birthday to You" that are resung occasionally in classrooms can be printed out on a chart to be taken out during song-times. A songleader points to the words as the class sings along, children gradually come to recognize basic words (*happy, to, you*). Similar charts can be developed based on jump rope chants.
  - 6 **Word Cards** In interactive sessions, children match word and meaning cards, e.g., color words with samples of color, number words with numbers, animal words with animal pictures, object words with object pictures. Words and meanings matched are written into stories dictated to the teacher.
  - 7 **Personal Word Cards** Children who hear or read words they would like to use can write or dictate them on individual cards, illustrating the cards to show meanings. Cards are studied when children need words to use in writing. Older students can do the same, writing the new word creatively to communicate its meaning. Encountering the word *enormous*, for instance, a youngster writes it in extra large letters to illustrate its meaning and places the card into his/her magic word box to share and use.

**Learning to Use Context in Reading** Most adults striking an unfamiliar word in reading determine meaning by relating it to known words in the passage and to associated pictures. Faced with sentences such as *Educators must begin with the relationship between language and communication. It is this fundamental nexus that gives direction to language arts teaching*, the adult uses the context to figure out that *nexus* means relationship.

**Interpreting Story Words in Context** Many books for young readers have been written to facilitate use of context clues. In a book for upper graders, accompanying the sentence *Matty was disheartened*, might be a picture of an obviously unhappy *Matty*, likewise in a book for early readers, accompanying the sentence *Bob looked in the window* might be a picture of Bob doing just that. Sentences too have been constructed to aid readers in figuring out word meanings. In one reader for upper elementary students is the sentence *Now wrap up the glasses as quickly as possible and charge them to my account*. A youngster who may never have used *account* in exactly that way can figure out from the sequence of sentence events that *account* has to do in some way with paying the bill.

A major teaching task is to help young readers use context productively. Students talking about *Matty's* problem or *Bob's* actions may study the pictures, urged by the teacher. Look at the picture. How do you think *Matty* feels? When have you felt the same way? What word in the story expresses that feeling? Or Look at the picture. What is *Bob* doing? What story sentence also tells what *Bob* is doing? Students talking about "how people pay bills" can likewise go back to the book to determine the meaning of *account* from contextual use.

From *2500000*  
*Younger et al. Plus Ten*  
*Fables and Fables*  
*Level A (New York)*  
*McGraw-Hill*  
*Driscoll 1973)*

**Perceiving Chunks of Meaning** Ability to use context to determine word meanings can be developed through experience charts in primary grades. The experience chart is dictated by children as their teacher records words on charting paper for all to see. Typically sentences dictated by young children contain many words that they soon recognize by sight and read without difficulty. In addition, sentences contain more difficult words to read. Having seen their words on a chart, the youngsters read them aloud, perhaps along with their teacher. Later, they read the sentences alone, using the meaningful context to figure out and remember words they cannot recognize.

Burmeister (1975) suggests that the teacher cut up dictated sentences into phrases or word groups, cutting a sentence like *Terry pulled the gerbil's tail* into *Terry pulled* and *the gerbil's tail*. Children reconstruct cut-up sentences by laying out the parts on the Composing Stage or in the chalk trough. This approach offers a major advantage in that it helps children recognize that language works in what Bill Martin (1974, p. 12) calls "chunks of meaning." As Martin explains, in learning to speak their language, people learn to cluster or group words into meaningful units within sentences; they do not "isolate the word sounds from the sentence sounds in which they [are] cast." In fluent reading the same is true. People read groups of words as meaningful units, pausing not between each word or sound, but between chunks of meaning.

Working with reconstructed sentences that show the divisions between chunks, the child reads chunks as units with the teacher's hand guiding eyes across the sheet. Emphasis in this case is on reading for meaning, which, after all, is what reading is all about. To facilitate children's perception of the chunks of meaning of which sentences and passages are comprised, the teacher can imitate Martin's style of writing down material for children to read, breaking stories into line units based on meaning. Martin also advocates choral reading of poetry since facile poets lay out lines in terms of meanings of words within sentences.

Comprehension of the idea that words pattern in meaningful units is an important learning if children are to use context productively in reading. To facilitate this learning, teachers must stress meaningful phrasing of words in oral reading. The teacher might propose "Read the story sentence telling what the bees are doing." After a participant has read the sentence, the teacher might say, "Let's all read that sentence again, putting words together in groups to show meaning." 2 demonstrate by reading it as youngsters read along, and 3 ask individuals to read other sentences in the same way.

**The CLOZE Strategy** Contextual meaning is also at the heart of the CLOZE strategy, which simply stated is the insertion of numbers of words for one deleted from a sentence. Faced with a storybook sentence, children substitute other words for one already deleted from it. "They all laughed at the elephant's [trunk]." Although many words can fit in the blank formed by the deletion of *trunk*, context limits what is possible if meaning is to be sensible. The same technique can



And ever since  
the three little pigs  
have lived peacefully  
together  
in the brick house  
built by the smartest  
of them all



Words children might  
substitute for trunk include  
ears, skin, feet, tail, tusks,  
nose, mouth

be applied equally well to stories children dictate. The teacher writes out one sentence from a larger story minus one word, asking, "What words can we put in this spot in our sentence?" *The \_\_\_\_\_ saw a red rat?* As children supply alternatives, the teacher records them as parallel sentences beneath the original one. Now using context, children read the entire series of structurally similar sentences first along with their teacher, then individually.



**Sentence Expansion** Or the teacher can apply the expansion strategy. Recording in the middle of another chart a sentence like *The rat was sitting by the road*, the teacher suggests, "Now let's think about what words we could add between *The* and *rat* to tell what kind of a rat it was." He/she draws an arrow up between the two key words to focus children's attention and then records along the line words that children suggest.

The expansion strategy has application in upper grades too as young people encounter stories in books. In Holt's *Sounds of Language Reading Series* clues are given to the teacher on sentences that boys and girls can expand in this way. Teachers using other reading series should be alert for spots that are perfect for expansion of meanings.

**Experience Story Charts – A Limitation** In the preceding section experience charts have been described as good reading materials for young children. Through charts children acquire a concept of left-to-right progression, begin to relate spoken words to written ones, and acquire some skill in using context to uncover meaning as part of an overall language experience approach. Cooperative composing of story charts leads naturally into individual dictation of stories and eventually into individual recording of stories children create on their own. Through dictating stories, children begin to consider appropriate capitalization, punctuation, and indentation.

As with any productive technique, however, experience charts have limitations. Children using charts read only what they have written themselves. They interpret ideas they themselves have thought. Words they themselves have supplied. Then too there is a thrill in beginning to read from a real book — a thrill delayed for a child reading only from charts and personal dictations. In this respect a program built totally around student prepared materials is limiting.

Today many simple books are available for the beginning reader. Some pre primers and parallel readers are delightful. The language arts oriented Holt series authored by Martin (1974) is a pleasure to read and behold. Other more traditional basal series have moved away from the routine content typical of readers of the past and are equally enticing, though they stress decoding skills more than the Martin books. Mini-books with limited vocabulary that take children into the wild blue yonder of the imagination to encounter really splendid words and ideas are available too. An instance in point is the First Read-By-Myself Books With Ten Word Texts written by Patty Wolcott (Addison Wesley, 1974). Titles in the series demonstrate the direction that the new materials are taking: *The Marvelous Mud Washing Machine*, *Super Sam* and *the Salad Garden Pickle Pickle Juice*.



See also some of Dr.  
Seuss's beginning books  
such as *Oh! the Thinks*  
*You Can Think!*



Colorful jolly exciting — some of these more recent primers and beginning books introduce new ideas feelings words into children's experience

**Learning to Apply Phonics Understanding in Reading** Understanding of the relationship between the English sound and written symbol systems can be applied when meeting a known word in print for the first time or at a point where it is not yet a part of a reader's sight vocabulary. Knowing what sounds are associated with letters or letter combinations, the reader sounds out the word and then goes on to associate meaning with the sounds produced, recognizing those sounds as a word he/she knows. Unless the reader takes this last step and assigns meaning, the potential of phonics understandings goes unrealized.

To use phonics productively to decode the printed word, a reader must be able to differentiate language sounds and possess a storehouse of words packed with meaning. Teachers should keep in mind that unless a child can distinguish among language sounds and has a storehouse of meaningful words to command, understanding of phonetic relationships has little value. From this point of view, phonics is only one component of a larger reading program.

**The Content of a Phonics Program** Language scholars have identified specific sound-symbol relationships within the English language. Certain sounds are associated consistently with specific consonants: b, d, f, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, t, v, w, and z. In most elementary phonics programs, children begin by working with these consistent consonant-phoneme-grapheme correspondences. In addition, readers begin to comprehend and are able to handle in practice these fundamental generalizations that, of course, have obvious exceptions:

- 1 c and g followed by e, i, or y generally represent soft sounds as in *city* and *gem*; c and g followed by o, a, or u generally represent hard sounds as in *cat* and *game*.
- 2 Two different consonants next to one another in a word often are read as a blending of the two as in *blend*, *dress*, and *stern*.
- 3 Two like consonants next to one another are generally read as only one as in *tall*, *mass*, *muff*.
- 4 Consonant digraphs (ch, sh, th, ph, ng, and at times ck) are read as a single consonant sound.
- 5 In a word with a single vowel letter not at the end of a word, the vowel is given its short sound as in *bat*, *cot*, *hit*, *sit*, *bet*. When the single vowel letter occurs at the end of the word, it generally is read as a long sound as in *so* and *he*.
- 6 When a single vowel letter occurs in the middle of a word and an e occurs at the end, the vowel is read as a long sound and the e is not sounded as in *hate*, *site*, *note*.
- 7 r following a single vowel letter changes the sound given to the vowel as in *car* and *for*.

In discussing the application of learnings such as those enumerated above, Spache (1976, p. 70) makes the point that "Since phonics is a



V = vowel  
C = consonant

rudimentary word perception technique, it must eventually be replaced by more advanced skills, such as syllabication " In upper grades as children handle longer words they come gradually to understand the manner in which English words are divided into syllables They work with words in which two vowel graphemes are separated by two consonants as in *window* and *tender* (V C C V), learning that words similar to these are divided between the consonants They work also with words in which two vowel graphemes are separated by a single consonant as in *spider* and *wagon* (V C V) and with words ending in a consonant-le pattern as in *noodle*

**Inductive Teaching of Phonics** Reading specialists who advocate phonetic analysis as a way of decoding written language generally suggest an inductive approach to the learning of phonics generalizations For example, teaching the two sounds represented by the letter g the instructor

- 1 asks students to brainstorm words that contain the letter g, recording words proffered on board or chart,
- 2 asks student volunteers to underscore the letter g in each word and to say each word aloud with the group, listening for differences in the sound represented by the g,
- 3 helps students classify the g words into two categories according to the differences in sounds perceived — hard g words and soft g words,
- 4 asks students to study the two categories to determine when the g is interpreted with a hard sound when it is interpreted with a soft sound,
- 5 asks students to search written material for g words to place in these categories,
- 6 provides follow-up activities and games in which students work with the sounds represented by the g letter

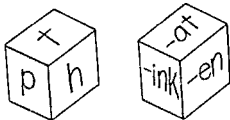
In the process, students generalize about when to read the letter g with a soft sound, when to read it with a hard sound Later as they meet a new g word in their reading the teacher guides them to recall the generalization and apply it to figure out what sound the letter g represents in that case This last step — applying understanding of sound symbol relationships to the decoding of words met in story and informational context — is the intended end of phonics learning Children reading along and encountering in print words such as *guest*, *gypsy*, *general*, *German*, *generation*, *gaiety* use their phonics skill to pronounce the words correctly and, having spoken the words relate them to things and ideas with which they are familiar Phonics is a tool for finding meaning in the printed word

As the steps in the teaching of the sounds represented by g indicate, interesting follow-up activities are important in reinforcing children's growing understanding of phonics generalizations Commonly used activities include

- 1 **Picture Clipping** Children clip from magazines pictures of objects whose names contain a particular sound Pictures are placed in a

box or mounted on the bulletin board carefully labeled with a word or two that contain the vowel or consonant sound in question with the grapheme underlined

- 2 **Word Searches** Given a card with several words containing a letter or letter group read in a particular way (a long vowel sound, a hard g sound, a diphthong *-oi*), children race to fill up the card with similar words. Children orally compare their words to determine a winner
- 3 **Word Buildings** Children build words from consonants, consonant blends, consonant digraphs, and groups of letters commonly found at the end of words (*-at, -en, -in, etc.*) These word building blocks can be simple cards inscribed appropriately or cubes that can be tossed and retossed to form new words to be read by putting together the combinations that land face up



**Learning to Recognize Meaningful Parts of Words** Word meaning and pronunciation can be unlocked through structural analysis, through identification of meaningful parts — namely prefixes, suffixes, roots, smaller words, and syllables — or through identification of special forms of words — namely, contractions and possessives. Structural analysis is particularly important in upper grades as students gain independence as readers and encounter longer words in reading.

A common introduction to structural analysis is compound words. *Playground football, sailboat* are compounds, formed by the combination of two free morphemes. Free morphemes are units of meaningful language that can stand alone as words, *football* is comprised of the free morphemes *foot* and *ball*, *sailboat*, of *sail* and *boat*, *playground* of *play* and *ground*. Children who realize that some words are made up of smaller words have a means of unlocking other words with this feature met in reading. They know too that the larger word brings together in its meaning elements of the meaning of its component words.

A second learning about language structure concerns the manner in which words are built through combination of free and bound morphemes. Prefixes and suffixes are bound morphemes, their addition to a smaller word changes the meaning of it. Often used English prefixes include *dis-*, *un*, *pre-*. Often used suffixes include *-s*, *-es*, *-ed*, *-ing*.

-less, -ful, which are important in the building of noun plurals and verb forms as well as of other words like *undouless* and *hateful*. A third learning revolves around words built through combination of a prefix and a root, both bound morphemes as in the case of *precede*, *biology*, *bisect*. Students apply their understanding of the meanings of prefixes, suffixes, and roots to unlock the meanings of new words met in reading.

Work with common morphemes is a challenge starting in primary grades. In one class, a teacher introduced compounds during a general languaging-together session, displaying words on cards (*house, boat, keeper, back, dress, tug, steam, load, hold*) that the students combined and recombined to form longer words. For each formed, participants tried to figure out the meaning basing hypotheses on the meaning of the little words and then checking in the dictionary. As follow-up, children in pairs searched magazine advertisements for words built in a similar fashion, and in work-teams created compound-word collages by stapling clipped words to oaktag. When collages were filled with data, teacher and students talked about some of the findings, applying the questions 'What are the two little words in the big one? What is the meaning of the big one?' During talk-times, the teacher posed compound word riddles: "I am filled with news. I am made of paper. What am I?" Students, who had reacted to teacher-posed riddles, created more sophisticated ones to offer for class perusal. Students also made picture puzzle cards to share with guessing friends. Puzzle cards come in pairs with one card illustrating the meaning of one of the component words, the second showing the meaning of the other. For example, a card colored all blue and a second showing a bird is a puzzle the solution of which is "bluebird." One with a foot, a second with printed letters is a harder puzzle — "footprint."

Similar kinds of activities with prefixes, suffixes, and roots can be part of other oral languaging-together times, with longer words being built from morpheme cards or blocks. Starting with a simple prefix such as *un-*, children form words, perhaps as a game in which the team forming the most words from the prefix is the winner. Words built in this way are checked for accuracy in dictionaries and may be constructed into mobiles in which the prefix, or eventually suffix, is mounted at the top and words built from it hang below.

Burmeister (1975) suggests an interesting approach to classroom word building — use of themes. 1 the number theme with words built from prefixes telling how many (*uni-, centi, milli, tri-, duo*), 2 the earth/heavens theme with words built from morphemes related to heavenly bodies (*astro-, cosmo-, sol-, luna-, geo-*) 3 the studies theme with words built from *-logy*. Any one of these themes can trigger word building activity. One day can be *-logy* day with youngsters on the look out for more *-logies* to pin up on the classroom word wall or paint with tempera on the window wall. Another can be *multi-* day, *mini-* day, *mono-* day when searches focus on a specific word building unit, or cell.

Structural analysis skills introduced in languaging together times should be applied directly within study of the content areas. Children

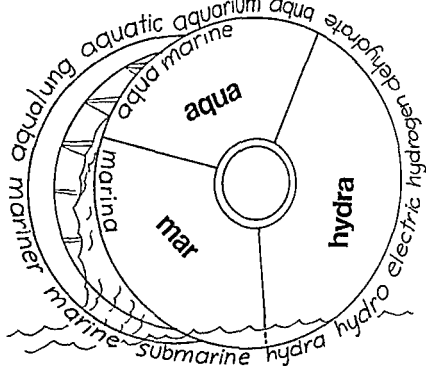


FIGURE 11 1 Water Wheel

can analyze relationships between a word read in science, mathematics, or social studies and common words already known. For instance, a perfect context for understanding prefixes *centi* and *milli* is during study of the metric system as young people work with measurement. A perfect context for learning about *sol-*, *astro-*, *luna-*, *cosmo-* is during study of astronomy. Especially with youngsters in grades 3 through 8, reading and talking in the content areas are times for students to refine their ability to analyze the structure of words and to apply their skill as they meet new words.

Structural analysis skills should be applied in spelling. Students learning to spell words built from small words, prefixes, suffixes think about word-building units, looking at words not as unrelated entities but as structurally related to words formed from similar units. The clear advantage of this approach is that students are simultaneously gaining practice in identifying similarities and differences, in building generalizations, and in constructing bridges between two highly related language processes — reading and spelling.

**Dictionary Skills.** Ability to use the dictionary to determine pronunciation and meaning of unfamiliar words is a fifth word attack skill. Although by necessity some attention must be given to how to interpret various aspects of a dictionary entry (see chapter 10 for details), equally important is the need to develop the habit of using the dictionary. To this end, the dictionary should be an integral part of oral language sessions to be kept in hand by a sleuth prepared to check out any puzzling words. The dictionary belongs on every table around which children gather to read, write, or edit. Viewed from this

perspective, dictionary use goes beyond reading to encompass every area of language interpretation and production and every area of the curriculum. Especially as young people interpret technical words in the content areas, the dictionary assumes added importance.

Take, for example, a young person who encounters the word *peccary* as he/she reads informational content about South America. Although that reader may be able to come up with an approximation of the correct pronunciation based on his/her phonics ability, the student has no comprehension of the meaning communicated by that combination of sounds. The dictionary, in this case Scott, Foresman's *Beginning Dictionary*, supplies a clear definition — "a wild animal with hoofs that is somewhat like a pig", "about 3 feet (1 meter) long" — as well as a picture and pronunciation clues (pek' ə rē). Especially as young people go on to read almanacs, magazines, newspapers, encyclopedias, automatic checking of dictionaries for meaning and pronunciation is most essential.

Some school books contain a glossary of terms that simplifies looking up words. Whenever children discuss content from a book with a glossary and have trouble comprehending a concept described there, a glossary check is a first step to be taken — a step that may shed light on a difficult idea.

**Attacking Words: A Perspective.** This section has described five word attack skills used to unlock the meaning of printed words. All five are part of a comprehensive reading program in which students gradually develop independence as readers. Unfortunately, in some classrooms phonetic analysis has become equated with reading; children spend most of their "reading period" associating written symbols with sounds. In these classrooms little time is actually spent in reading to find out and enjoy, with children as a result acquiring an erroneous notion of what reading really is. Phonics drills that fill an entire reading time are certainly not ways to turn children on to reading.

### **Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills**

- If you are unfamiliar with phonics concepts, read the programmed book *Fundamentals of Decoding for Teachers* (Schell, Rand McNally, 1975).
- Devise an activity sequence through which you could help children assimilate several words into their sight word storehouse. Remember to develop the words in meaningful contexts.
- Working with a group of primary children, put together an experience chart based on a firsthand experience enjoyed by the children. Encourage them to reread it, using their voices to express word and punctuation meanings. Later cut up the chart into meaningful chunks and have children reconstruct it.
- Devise an inductive sequence to teach a basic phonics generalization or a basic word-building strategy. Try it with a group of students.

## Comprehending What Is Read

Word attack skills are means to an end. In the case of reading, that ultimate end is comprehension of what has been read. Does the reader get the message?

**Comprehending Content — A Thinking-Feeling Process** A useful way to look at reading comprehension is through the lens provided in the classification of thinking acts devised by Benjamin Bloom (1956). Bloom and his associates defined seven major categories of intellectual functioning, suggesting these as levels of thinking in which students should be involved:

- 1 Memory — recall or recognition of information
- 2 Translation — transformation of information into a different symbolic form or language, as from words to pictures, words to physical action,
- 3 Interpretation — identification of relationships especially similarities, differences, and groupings within and among facts generalizations, definitions, skills, values,
- 4 Application — application of facts, generalizations, definitions, skills, and values to the resolution of a problem or the interpretation of a particular situation,
- 5 Analysis — identification of particular elements within a larger whole,
- 6 Synthesis — putting together of parts to form a new whole creating, inventing,
- 7 Evaluation — formulation of opinions and judgments based on clearly defined criteria

Students can respond to reading content by thinking along any of these lines. Students can respond too by 'feeling along' — by getting excited, by feeling depressed, by becoming concerned. This is an emotional, or affective, response to reading which if strong enough causes one to read on and on and on.

**Questioning Strategies** Perhaps the single most important factor determining what readers do with what they read is the kinds of questions asked by teachers guiding reading activity. Teachers can pose questions that require readers to recall detail: 'Where did the boy walk? What did the boy's mother tell him? What was the moral at the end of the fable?' To respond to these questions, readers repeat words or sentences. But teachers should pose questions that carry readers beyond simple recall, asking for —

- **Translations** Show me how the woman moved down the road. Read the driver's statement to the old woman, using your voice the way the driver must have used his. Show on your face the expression that must have been on the boy's at the end of the fable.
- **Interpretations of Main Idea, Story Relationships, Story Sequences** Why did the man help the driver of the cart? Why did the driver of the cart offer the woman a ride? Why did the woman offer the boy some bread and preserves? How are all the story incidents similar?



Questions based on the fable "One Good Turn"

different? What is the meaning or main idea communicated by the moral? What was the sequence of events?

- **Applications** Describe a situation in your life when the moral "One good turn deserves another" applied Describe someone to whom you could apply the word *generous* Describe an act you saw that was as generous as the ones in the fable
- **Analyses** How are the incidents in the story related to the title "One Good Turn"? What does *preserve* mean in "May heaven preserve you"? in "I believe I smell my favorite food — peach preserves"? How bad is a "bad accident"?
- **Syntheses** Let's compose a fable that leads to the conclusion "One good deed deserves another" Let's create a story composed of four episodes that build one upon another as in *One Good Turn*
- **Evaluations** Which act of all those in the story was the kindest one? Which person in the story acted with the most honest motivation? Why was the boy's act a good one? What about this story did you like? dislike?
- **Emotional Reactions** How did you feel when the boy turned away the reward? How did you feel when the lady gave the boy a generous portion of bread and preserves? At what point in the story were you most surprised? pleased?

**Moving Up the Reading-Thinking-Feeling Ladder** There is an hierarchical quality about thinking processes and about questions based on these processes To be able to respond to higher level tasks such as analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, the reader must be able to recognize what is going on in a passage In sum, he/she must get the facts straight in order to handle them in complex ways

Studies by Taba (1964) suggest that children in elementary schools will flounder if asked to perform higher level thinking without preliminary thinking through of content at lower levels This research establishes a sequence for the kinds of questions and activities a teacher should project Children who have read material respond first to questions of fact to be certain that they comprehend detail They then respond to higher level tasks, thinking about relationships and feelings, synthesizing new ones, judging, and at times going down the ladder of cognition to reclarify specifics

Unfortunately if teachers ask questions requiring just the telling of facts, children have little opportunity to try their wings at thinking and feeling about material in diverse ways Yes to comprehend in reading is to get the facts straight, but this is only one facet of comprehension To comprehend in reading is to be able to interpret translate, apply, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and feel

**Comprehending Literary Form** Bill Martin (1974 p 25) describes a group of children listening to a story with repetitive lines that pattern like one beginning "Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?" In succeeding units, brown bear becomes redbird, then, yellow duck Hearing these lines, children readily perceive the pattern, and when their teacher reads the third repetition in the sequence "Yellow duck,



One day he was awakened by the cries of a bunny rabbit who was being attacked by a fox. Without thinking, he went to help the rabbit even though he had no quills. Rushing to help, he felt wonderful, because quills were growing on his back. He shot the fox full of quills and saved the bunny rabbit.

From then on, Teddy had lots of friends and lived happily ever after.

There are many motifs such as "odd-man out" that are repeated in stories: rags-to-riches, beast-to-prince, the three wishes, to name just a few. The chart on the adjoining page summarizes common motifs and story structures, providing titles for introducing these reading and writing forms to boys and girls.

**Poetry Forms** Comprehension of the way poetry works is developed through similar kinds of experience with literary patterns. This is a fine context for integrating reading, listening, and writing, for primary graders can begin by listening to and chorusing perennial favorites such as "To Market, To Market."

To market, to market,  
To buy a fat pig,  
Home again, home again,  
Jiggety jig

To market, to market,  
To buy a fat hog,  
Home again, home again,  
Jiggety-jog

Comprehension of the form comes not through analysis but through direct experience with the poem through creating stanzas that pattern similarly. The teacher initiates oral creating by asking, "What else could we buy at the market?" Youngsters' responses are inserted into the second line as participants rechorus the piece, a rhyming last word is substituted at the end.

To market, to market,  
To buy a lamb chop,  
Home again, home again,  
Jiggety-jop

To market, to market,  
To buy a red hat,  
Home again, home again,  
Jiggety-jat

The same can be done with slightly more sophisticated pieces. Pat Ostrander's third graders listened as she shared Evelyn Beyers' "Jump and Jiggle" by reading from a large chart she had made (See chapter 9 for the poem). They quickly perceived the repetitive structure of the piece, figuring out that each line tells how another animal moves. Their teacher then triggered group composing by asking, "What else do people and animals do?" The youngsters agreed that all animals not only move about in different ways but make different sounds. Based on that thought, they created an original piece modeled directly after the Beyers'.

#### *Hou-l or Grou-l*

Dogs bark  
Crickets chirp  
Lions roar  
Bees buzz  
Snakes hiss  
Monkeys chatter

Hens cackle  
Ducks quack  
Cows moo  
Pigeons coo  
Wolves howl  
Bears growl

Frogs croak  
kittens purr

Mice squeak —

But —  
I speak!

Individually the third graders went on to create original noise poems adhering to the same structure

*Plot Motifs and Story Structures After Which Lower Elementary Graders Can Model Group Stories and Upper Graders Can Model Individual Stories*

*Plot Motifs from Fairy Tales, Fables, and Mythology*

**MOTIF**

- The long sleep or spell
- The wish granted
- The wise and the foolish
- The rescue from a harsh home
- The journey from home to adventure then back to safety
- The three impossible tasks to be accomplished
- The foolish advice followed
- The how it happened story

**EXAMPLES OF STORIES**

- Rip Van Winkle Sleeping Beauty Snow White Urasima Taro Beauty and the Beast
- King Midas The Three Wishes Sylvester and the Magic Pebble The Two Stonecutters
- Tortoise and the Hare Lion and the Mouse The Three Talents
- Hansel and Gretel Cinderella
- Little Red Riding Hood Where the Wild Things Are Jack and the Bean Stalk The Story About Ping
- A Story A Story Arno to the Sun Three Billy Goats Gruff Three Little Pigs
- The Man the Boy and the Donkey Silly Jean
- Just So Stories

*Story and Poetry Structures*

**STRUCTURE**

- The cumulative tale each event in the story sequence is essentially a repetition of the first event
- The add on cumulative tale lines are added to a growing sequence all previous lines are repeated with the addition of the new lines
- The question answer tale one question after another is followed by an answer
- The logical sequence tale each new unit adheres to a logical pattern such as numerical sequence day of the week sequence seasons of the year sequence alphabetical sequence

**EXAMPLES OF STORIES**

- Henny Penny The Little Red Hen The Five Chinese Brothers You Look Ridiculous Said the Rhinoceros to the Hippopotamus
- Who Said See Said Who? Gingerbread Boy One Fine Day Drummer Hoff The House That Jack Built
- What Do You Do Dear? What Do You Say Dear?
- May I Bring a Friend? As I Was Crossing Boston Common One Little Two Little Three Little Indians The First Day of Christmas One Monday


**Comprehending Literary Style.** The words of accomplished writers have a melody that sings in the ears and trips gracefully over the tongue. Children who perceive the melody of sentence sounds are better readers in that they are on the way toward comprehending the relationship between melody and meaning. At the elementary level, comprehension and ultimately appreciation of the cadence of written words are achieved at the intuitive level by hearing tuneful sentence sounds in stories read aloud, by hearing word music in their mind's ear as they read to themselves, and by creating word magic as they compose stories and poems. In an integrated language arts approach to reading, reading comprehension exists not in isolation but in conjunction with listening comprehension and language production as shown in the following series of language experiences.

**Reading Along While Listening Along.** Some teachers have experimented with reading a story to students who follow along on written copies of it. These teachers read as expressively as they can, clustering words in meaningful chunks and vocally expressing meanings of words and punctuation signals. Listeners volunteer to reread individually and in chorus, modeling their renditions after the teacher's. The teacher then divides the group into pairs, to reinterpret the story orally to one another.

This reading-along-while-listening-along approach to reading for literary style is an attempt to make children more aware that individual language sounds and words exist as part of larger units of meaning and that in reading they must consider these as wholes to be understood and expressed. Children rereading passages they have just read-along-while-listening-along develop skill as oral readers who vocally can interpret meanings found on the printed page.

Oral reading has been employed in the past primarily to determine children's comprehension of content, unfortunately, ability to decode words in sequence does not necessarily carry with it ability to understand what is being read. On the other hand, oral reading can build skill in interpreting meanings vocally, and can be used to initiate talk about content, form, and style. Checking for content comprehension, the teacher can ask a group that has read a passage silently, "Find and read aloud the sentence that describes Paul's feeling toward his grandfather." Checking for comprehension of form, the teacher can ask, "Read aloud a sentence that the author uses to bind the whole story (poem) together." Checking for comprehension of style, the teacher can ask, "Read aloud any sentence the sound of which is like music." As children volunteer, teachers can help them read rhythmically suggesting that a group reread the lines with flair and feeling, phrasing words in chunks of meaning, and pausing at the punctuation signals. In this context, oral reading is a time for comprehending written style.

**Preparing Stories and Poems for Oral Sharing.** Children who have experienced reading-along-while-listening-along can take a next step and prepare stories and poems for oral interpretation. A youngster who is enjoying a book can select a passage to prepare for oral reading to the teacher during a personalized conference or to a larger listening group. He/she can prepare a story and record it on tape for other children to hear.

 Helen Schneeberg  
"Listening While Reading"  
A Four Year Study. *The*  
*Reading Teacher* 30  
(March 1977) 629-35  
This article describes a  
study val dat ng read ng  
ng while listening along  
and suggests another  
strategy "echo read ng"  
wh ch the teacher reads  
rst and the children echo  
the same sentences and  
phrases

Reading the passage to teacher, group, or tape, the student goes on to explain why he/she selected that particular part to share

When children share with one another stories prepared for oral reading in these ways, the likelihood of tedious, sound by sound and word by word reading and listening is decreased. Where children still read almost completely on a sound-by sound basis, the teacher is wise to schedule time for individual oral reading, working with youngsters by themselves and giving individual, specific assistance at decoding sounds and words. Reading can be made an impossibly unpleasant process for students who must sit and listen to others stumble through a selection, in the process, they are acquiring an erroneous learning—that words on the printed page have no music, no style. Especially for facile readers who must listen while classmates stumble along, such learning is disastrous, for word magic and beauty are being destroyed for them.

**Reconstructing Stories and Resetting Punctuation** Children can begin to perceive the structure of sentences a writer has put together to communicate meaning by manipulating the phrases of which sentences are comprised. Teachers have found it productive to print on strips key sentences from basal, trade book, and children's stories. Key sentences are ones that carry the story forward. These teachers cut the key sentence strips into "chunks of meaning" or phrases, and distribute the parts to youngsters who have just read a story. Based on their understanding of content and style, the children reconstruct the story laying out the sentence strips in a meaningful and melodious sequence. To do this, they must juggle pieces around, striving for synthesis that retells the story with style, they try out for instance a prepositional phrase or adverbial cluster first at the beginning then in the middle, then at the end of a sentence until they find a location that results in a flowing, clear sentence. Participants in the story reconstruction go on to add requisite punctuation markers.

Having reconstructed the story and reset the punctuation, children read it aloud individually or in concert to test the final arrangement for "word music." Several learnings are achieved through the story reconstruction strategy: 1 to recognize that word clusters have a style that helps in communicating meaning, 2 to express this style in oral interpretations, and 3 to put words together in their own writing with some degree of fluidity.

**Experimenting by Inserting — A Variation of CLOZE** As we noted earlier (see pp. 437–38) CLOZE is the process of inserting a word where one has been deleted within a sentence. This technique can be varied to help children perceive fine distinctions in meaning and feeling communicated through an author's choice of words. Reading a sentence such as *The elephant lumbered down the path*, youngsters can pantomime the meaning communicated by the word *lumbered*. Now in the blank formed by removing the word *lumbered*, they insert words that could fit there too — *plodded, walked, tramped, pranced* — pantomiming each in turn and trying to guess why the writer selected *lumbered* rather than one of these others. In some cases, students doing this may decide that the word in the story is "perfect" in terms of mean-



Having reconstructed a story from cards supplied them, children can go on to create sentence cards that summarize stories read and to cut the strips into subject and predicate parts making story puzzles that other readers try to reconstruct and reset with punctuation.

ing, feeling, and even sound, in other cases they may decide that an alternative is actually preferred

The procedure of inserting words where one has been removed from a passage is productive particularly with adjectives and adverbs. *Huge, gigantic, immense, enormous, extra large* are just five words that upper graders may insert in a big blank. With the assistance of a thesaurus, *leisurely, pokily, and sluggishly* may be inserted in a *slowly* blank. Word sleuths talk about the mood set by the selection of particular words by a writer and begin to perceive word choice as part of the style of selections they are reading.

**Reading Comprehension — A Perspective.** This section has proposed a broad view of reading comprehension inclusive of content, form, and style. To achieve comprehension, teachers need to examine in advance passages children will hear and read, considering the kinds and levels of comprehension possible. Unless teachers preplan their lessons, questions and activities related to reading may stagnate at the reading-for-recall level of content comprehension. As a result, students have little opportunity to try their response wings at higher levels of cognition and at literary analysis. Planning for discussions to follow silent reading consists of thinking through questions and activities such as pantomime, story reconstruction, and oral interpretation through which readers come to grips with what they are reading.

### **Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills**

- Select a basal reader from the grade level you are or will be teaching. For one story, compose a series of questions through which children could move up the ladder of reading cognition to translate, interpret, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. Develop several questions or activities through which students handle the literary form and/or style of the selection.
- Locate a picture storybook or poem through which primary children could intuitively develop a sense of literary structure. Share the piece and follow up with a sequence through which children experiment directly with the structure.
- Locate a story from a basal reader or trade book. Prepare sentence cards based on key sentences from the story, cut the cards into significant units of meaning, and lead a group that has heard or read the story in reconstructing it from the cards.

### **Learning to Use the Library-Media Center**

As children develop word attack and comprehension skills, it is essential that they have continuing opportunities to apply those skills by reading books they themselves select from library-media center shelves. To navigate their way amid all the delights to be found in a library and to operate within the system through which books and other materials are shelved and cataloged, students need preliminary assistance. This assistance begins in kindergarten.



Visiting the library

**Primary Children in the Library** Kindergarten children take pleasure in visiting the school library as a group to select picture storybooks to take home and read. Youngsters should go to the library as a class with each being given opportunity to squat down on the floor before the houses where the picture storybooks are kept and to pick a book to carry home. Beck and Pace (1967) recommend that the major direction to be given young library visitors at this stage is to return a book to the shelf so that the spine shows for the next person to see. They also recommend sending a note home suggesting that the parent sit with child and book reading it aloud to cultivate the reading habit.

As youngsters in primary grades develop elemental alphabetizing skills, alphabetizing storybooks becomes a logical next step. Completing a book, each youngster constructs a good sized spine from construction paper, printing on it the author's last name and the book title. Each spine is mounted alphabetically according to author's last name on the bulletin board, the result being a mock up of a library shelf on which fiction is housed.

Shortly, children should begin to differentiate between fiction (or storybooks) and nonfiction (or informational books). At this point, children visiting the library take time to browse in specific areas of the library pointed out to them: science, history, sports, biography, poetry. Returning with their books to the classroom, youngsters can make book jackets for mounting on a bulletin board captioned "Nonfiction We Are Reading" and labeled with subtopics — science, sports, history.

Paralleling children's introduction to the library as a place to find books is an introduction to the library as a media center. Today libraries are repositories for sound, filmstrips, tapes, records — all of which can be made available in independent study carrels for individual use. By middle first grade, most youngsters can be taught how to operate tape recorders and filmstrip viewers through laboratory-type hands-on instruction. Once youngsters have gained skill in operating the hardware, they independently can make visits to the library media center to study audio-visual materials that relate to ongoing class investigations and to listen to filmed picture storybooks. Librarians can serve as

resource people, who help locate relevant materials and set aside in bins marked with teachers' names those items children in a class will find interesting and helpful

**Intermediate Students in the Library.** More complex library-related skills should be built beginning as early as third grade: interpreting the parts of a book, locating items in the card catalog, working with the Dewey Decimal System, differentiating kinds of catalog cards, and using encyclopedias and other reference materials. Children preparing classroom reports in the content areas will benefit from some preliminary instruction that leads to facile use of the library. Specific activities to adapt for use in third through sixth grades include—

- 1 **Book Making** Students learn about title page, publisher, copyright, table of contents, index, chapters by producing a class informational book replete with these basic parts. Working on a science or social studies topic, groups handle different aspects of that topic, with each group assuming responsibility for the production of a book chapter. An editorial team compiles all the chapters, setting up the table of contents and the title page. Bring into the classroom several informational books that serve as models for book making.
- 2 **Entering the Card Catalog** Label a series of shoe boxes with the same letter labels found on the drawers of the school card catalog: A-C, D-E, F-H, etc. After a visit to the library when all children have brought back a book, each writes on a card the author's name, last name first. The class decides which "drawer" should contain a card and orders the cards alphabetically within each "drawer."
- 3 **Three Kinds of Cards** Using actual cards from the card catalog, print up the three cards that exist for one informational book: a subject, an author, and a title card. Do this for five different books, making giant-sized cards clearly visible to all participants. Display each set of three cards, guiding children to discover the differences among the cards. Later display all fifteen cards at once, encouraging students to group them into three batches: subject, title, author. On a later library visit, children can browse through the card catalog seeing if they can locate samples of the three kinds of cards.



The major units of the  
Dewey Decimal  
Classification System

- 000 Generalities
- 100 Philosophy
- 200 Religion
- 300 Social sciences
- 400 Language
- 500 Pure sciences
- 600 Technology (applied sciences)
- 700 The arts
- 800 Literature
- 900 Geography and history

- 4 **On the Subject** Fifth and sixth graders should be able to use the card catalog to locate books on a subject they are investigating. Help them to identify clearly the subject of their investigations before looking up that topic in the card catalog.
- 5 **The Numbers Have It!** Introduce fifth and sixth graders to the Dewey Decimal System if the school library is organized according to it. Start by making a classroom chart showing the numbers used to catalog important groupings of nonfiction. Then gather a pile of books. Children decide the order in which the books are arranged on the library shelves. To ease in teaching the Dewey Decimal System, borrow an idea from Eleanor Schwartz, a librarian who has made numerous book spines imprinted with book title, author, and Dewey Decimal number copied from library books. Each youngster in the group holds a spine, cooperatively they decide how to order the books on a shelf. Now as

youngsters visit the library they use the major divisions of the Dewey system to locate books they need

- 6 **The Encyclopedia** Introduce the organization of encyclopedias by rolling in a set and distributing volumes to youngsters gathered in groups of three Working from front to back of volumes students can discover the organization they can look up particular items in the index portion of a volume and locate the relevant pages On the spot students can use the volumes distributed to locate information on a topic being studied at that point brainstorming all the possible subtopics related to the topic locating them in the volumes scanning the sections and orally sharing key ideas Earlier teachers of younger grades can set the stage by bringing in pictures from *Child Craft* *World Book Encyclopedia* and *Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia* to share as part of story telling and discussion times or by reading a very short and interesting selection to lay the foundation for group discussion
- 7 **Other References** As previously mentioned school and public libraries are repositories for magazines newspapers atlases almanacs and a multitude of other references So that young people begin to comprehend the kinds of information contained within these sources schedule some comparison times in which young people in groups compare the content and organization of several different magazines (e.g. *Reader's Digest* *Newsweek* *Consumer Reports* *National Geographic*) analyze the features in different newspapers and categorize atlases almanacs and specialty volumes according to the kind of information supplied

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Prepare a lesson to introduce upper graders to an interesting reference such as an atlas or the *Guinness Book of World Records* Through your lesson help students to discover for themselves the organization of the volume and provide opportunity for meaningful use
- Set up a series of author title and subject cards through which you could introduce fourth graders to the card catalog
- Review for yourself the Dewey Decimal System

### Reading Skills — A Summary Thought or Two

Through reading instruction in elementary schools children should build and refine their skill in attacking words met on the printed page and in comprehending the content form and style of what they have read Both word attack and comprehension skills can and should be developed in highly meaningful contexts — as part of oral communication times pleasurable reading encounters with story poem and non-fiction and study in the content areas As young people progress through the grades more and more reading occurs as children read informational materials in social studies science mathematics and current



Read and enjoy Ed in  
Big Children's  
Literature as a  
Springboard to Content  
Areas *Reading Teacher*  
30(May 1977) 855-59



events study. At this point additional reading skills come into play associated with reading to obtain ideas for oral and written presentation. This type of reading study skill has been dealt with in chapter 5 because summarizing, selecting significant from less significant, noting, quoting are most meaningfully developed when students have a purpose for their investigations — to share their findings with others. Other reading-associated skills also gain in importance in upper grades as young people use those skills as part of purposeful investigations: ability to interpret maps, globes, graphs, tables, charts, timelines, cartoons, ability to communicate through these pictorial-written forms, ability to locate library materials via the card catalog, ability to get information from newspapers, magazines, and references, ability to interpret a writer's point of view, assumptions, and prejudices.

Growth in reading skills is a primary objective of elementary language instruction. Taking delight in reading and developing the reading habit are primary objectives too. In every classroom, there should be *equal time* for personalized reading in books students select from the classroom library and on visits to school and public libraries. Skills are learned so that young people are able to explore the worlds of reality and fantasy bound within books and appreciate the joy of striking out on reading explorations. Schools must supply young people with opportunity not only to learn to read but to read and read and read some more in ever-widening explorations.

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Marty  
Quinn



## Part 4

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an overview of  
ways of  
designing  
language  
activities for  
exceptional  
children in the  
regular  
elementary class

Chapter 12  
Language Arts for A Child en —  
And with Extras

Review  
WILL YOU JOIN THE DANCE?

# Language arts for all children— and with extras!

"We had the best of educat ons — in fact, we

went to school every day —

"I've been to a day school too " said Alice You needn't be so proud as all that "

With extras? asked the Mock Turtle a little anxiously

"Yes " said Alice

*Alice in Wonderland*

→  
experiencing words for  
expression

As Beth Venezia and her class of second graders walked along the path of the Nature Center, three students with Jotting Books in hand stopped by each labeled tree to note its name Janice, a youngster with a reading level of 7th grade, 6 months, checked really interesting trees in the Golden Nature Guide, *Trees A Guide to Familiar American Trees*, a small reference she carried along in a pocket Class members talked as they walked, describing observations in words, thinking about relationships among the plants and animals they saw, and identifying relatively familiar plants like maples, ferns oaks, and pond lilies

Shortly the class came to a thicket where they quietly sat down to watch birds alighting there When children sighted a new bird, Janice and Mark with Ms Venezia's guidance looked it up in Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds* by comparing key features observed with illustrations found in the *Guide* Reading the entry to themselves, they summarized the information orally for the class In passing, Ms Venezia mentioned that several birds were nesting in the thicket Timmy, a boy with a Jotting Book, recorded that word as the whole class talked about why it was a good descriptor of what they saw

→  
expanding the vocabulary

**The Language-Gifted at Work.** Back in the classroom that afternoon Ms Venezia gathered Janice, Mark, Timmy, and Phyllis — all of whom were facile readers with a high curiosity level and substantial vocabularies — for a talking writing session Referring to their jotting books, the four talked about the kinds of trees they had noted — sassafras, sweetgum, tulip — checking the tree guide again to find out more about each As they talked and listened to one another, they began to propose sentences to write down Timmy a boy with a slight stutter, served as scribe and recorded the sentences that were being suggested

→  
developing logical thinking  
and writing skills

When the four were finished composing they checked punctuation, juxtaposed sentences to achieve a more logical order, combined and transformed some sentences, and decided upon a title Cooperatively they redictated the revised paragraph as Timmy printed it neatly as a chart — a chart that the group shared with classmates later in the day

### *Our Visit to the Fanwood Nature Center*

Today we went to the Fanwood Nature Center. We found gumballs from sweetgum trees. We gathered them to make Christmas ornaments. Fungus was growing on a white birch tree and we looked at a sassafras tree. Tea and soap can be made from the sassafras roots. A lady rode a white horse on the nature trails. When we listened, we heard a cardinal, but we didn't see him. We saw sparrows, bluejays, and wrens in thickets along the brook. The brook was partly frozen. Someday we will go back again.

**The Language-Slow at Work** As the language gifted youngsters began to redictate their edited report to Timmy, Ms. Venezia went on to help a second group of slower learners for whom reading and writing were more difficult. Armed with samples of leaves, needles, and cones given them by the guide at the nature center, these youngsters were making colored pictures of the leaves of the maple and oak, of clusters of needles of the pine and spruce, and of a pine cone. Next to each drawing, they were labeling the appropriate name, copying it from a list posted on a chart nearby. On Ms. Venezia's arrival, they talked together about the things they had seen that morning. Each child related what he/she had liked best about the trip. Then they dictated several lines as their teacher recorded for them on charting paper.

### *Our Trip*

We went to the Nature Center. We saw maple trees. We saw oak trees. We saw some bluejays. We saw a lady on a big horse.

Completing the dictation, they joined together to read their report. Each child had an opportunity to read aloud one sentence from it, the sentence he/she liked best. Then each copied the report, stapling the copy to a piece of colored construction paper. Labeled pictures drawn earlier that afternoon were stapled to the report to form a booklet that a youngster could title as he/she wished.

**The Language-Different, Too!** While these boys and girls were compiling their booklets, Ms. Venezia was already actively involved with still a third group of youngsters — a small group of two who were learning English as a second language and for whom the trip to the nature preserve provided a meaningful context for expanding their English vocabulary. With them, Ms. Venezia talked, using many of the words met on the trip. And then she was off again to work with a larger group of average youngsters!

### **Exceptional Children in Regular Classrooms**

The range of abilities and disabilities, interests and disinterests, previous experiences and language backgrounds in most elementary

← working with  
meaningful words  
writing in and reading  
patterned sentences

classrooms is broad, especially today with the trend toward mainstreaming — placing in regular classrooms children with exceptional learning problems. As Beth Venezia discovered, an elementary class can be comprised of some children who are gifted, slow, language different, speech handicapped, visually handicapped, hearing impaired and/or emotionally disturbed and some who possess a combination of these characteristics. Let us talk very briefly about these children focusing mainly on how a teacher can meet their needs in a heterogeneous elementary school classroom. Because space limitations prevent in-depth coverage here, readers are urged to investigate topics in greater detail by studying a standard text on exceptional children.



Percentages of highly able students in an "average" population (after Terman and Merrill, 1960)

|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| IQ 110-120 (high average)  | 18.1% |
| IQ 120-140 (superior)      | 11.3% |
| IQ 140-170 (very superior) | 1.3%  |



See Michael Labuda  
Creative Reading for  
Gifted Learners (Newark  
Del.: Educational Reading  
Association, 1974)

**The Language-Gifted** Schools tend to equate giftedness with rapid and extensive language development, considering early readers who have large vocabularies and ability to perform higher level cognitive tasks as 'gifted'. Without a doubt, these children are gifted, but giftedness can be expressed in other ways. There are musically, artistically, dramatically, mechanically, and/or personality gifted children. Looking at giftedness from this perspective, one realizes that a child can be highly able in one area, less able in others.

Of special concern to the language arts and reading teacher, of course, are the language-gifted. These children generally require only limited participation in reading readiness activities since they may enter school as self-taught readers. For language-gifted children, the teacher must open doors that encourage them to enter new areas of learning by

- providing a room filled with books to consume — books that fascinate those who already find words a fascination, *The Guinness Book of World Records*, an atlas, a world almanac, encyclopedias, a giant-sized dictionary, field guides, an adult thesaurus — all are 'musts' for the gifted starting in second grade,
- scheduling trips to the library to select books that stimulate curiosity and satisfy children's hunger to find out,
- scheduling small group discussions that treat subjects in greater depth than is possible with a full class,
- asking questions that lead readers to carry on complex thinking processes: interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation,
- encouraging children to interrelate aspects of a particular experience and to go beyond repetitive tasks to solve related problems,
- suggesting sophisticated assignments: interviewing, researching, keeping notes for the entire class, making tapes, filmstrips, slides, creating language games,
- encouraging leadership by asking youngsters to share findings with others, to lead a discussion, to explain, to show how.

For the language-gifted student, writing must be soldered tightly together with reading as children develop ability to handle diverse literary forms and styles met in reading. Writing original versions mod-

eled after published story structures and styles, writing and sending letters to magazine and newspaper editors, writing critical reviews of stories, writing abbreviated encyclopedias, almanacs, atlases after researching a topic — all these are writing assignments that flow naturally out of reading that language gifted pursue independently or in small groups.

Then too the teacher must extend gifted children's language skills guiding them to discover more intriguing words and to work with more sophisticated ideas and language patterns. The National Assessment of Educational Progress's study on writing mechanics (1973) indicates that very few nine year olds write fully developed paragraphs focusing on a topic sentence, and that there are fewer higher ranking papers today than in the past. These results suggest that gifted children are not necessarily gifted in all elements of written language and need active involvement with combining shorter sentences into longer ones, thinking through the relationships among ideas and the logic of paragraph development, sequencing ideas to insure clear communication, and editing what they have written.

Although research by Termin (1925-59) shows that gifted children are as a group superior in physique and general health among them are youngsters who are handicapped in speech, hearing, vision or social adjustment problems. A noteworthy example is Helen Keller who was born both deaf and blind. A gifted child can be shy, restless and inattentive, demanding, he/she can show signs of stuttering or inability to perceive some sounds or inability to articulate clearly. Pagnato and Birch (1959) found that teachers do have trouble identifying gifted children, selecting as gifted about one-third of the time those who are not intellectually superior and failing in many instances to identify those with exceptional mental ability. In identifying the gifted — which is essential if these youngsters are to be given schooling to meet their needs — teachers should not focus on how polite, congenial, attentive to class work children are. Rather they should ask:

- How rapidly does this child learn? How clearly does he/she perceive relationships?
- How probing are the child's questions? How curious is he/she?
- What level books does the child read? How extensive is his/her oral vocabulary?
- How easily does he/she pick up and retain information?
- How divergent are the child's answers? How creative and novel are his/her approaches to problems?

**The Language-Slow.** The slow learner, like the gifted, is probably not exceptional in every facet of growth, but when slowness is evident in language development it often affects other aspects of learning. Peterson (Haring, 1974) defines slow learners as those with IQs between 85 and the high 90s, these youngsters receive the lowest school marks and are more likely to drop out of school. Since about twenty percent of the population have IQs between 70 and 90 and

## Y

Ask gifted readers to compare

- two different versions of the same story
- several books by the same author and/or illustrator
- books by two different authors and/or illustrators

Having compared students develop original versions or write in the style of a writer analyzed



Giving special attention  
to the slow learner




since these youngsters are placed in regular classrooms in most instances, the teacher must be aware of the slow learner's special language needs

The language-slow require much more participation in reading readiness activities, with readiness experiences continuing even beyond the primary years. They require more assistance as they begin to write down their own thoughts and are dependent on others to record their dictations for a longer period of time. More repetitions are necessary for words to enter the sight vocabulary, more drill required to learn mechanical operations. They find abstractions harder to grasp. In this respect, teachers must be more patient and more creative in guiding slow learners, realize that learning is time-consuming, and invent numerous and new contexts that provide continuing practice with the same content.

Because the language-slow take longer to learn and to reach a stage where they are able to handle abstractions, particularly valuable activities include

- playing games in which learners match pictures that begin with the same sounds or contain the same rhyming sounds, match pictures with appropriate words,
- working with classroom labels,
- clipping pictures from newspapers and magazines and attaching labeling words or sentences with teacher assistance, drawing and labeling children's own pictures,

 See John Carty, *The Slow Learner and the Reading Problem* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1972)

- working with concrete objects and firsthand experiences — these objects and experiences provide a context for continued meaningful vocabulary development
- reading and writing wordless books
- writing stories by drawing a sequence of pictures
- writing from brainstormed words posted on clearly visible charts or boards
- considerable talking about ideas before writing
- considerable listening to stories shared by teacher or recorded on tape followed by talking and group writing utilizing repetitive sentence patterns

Because limited language facility has impact on all areas of school learning growth in language skills should be a primary goal of science and social studies experiences especially with slow learners reading writing discussing and vocabulary development should be integral facets of involvement in the content areas Paul Brandwein (1958) proposes a structure for language and content centered sessions particularly useful with slow learners but actually applicable to the heterogeneous intermediate level class with a wide range of abilities Brandwein suggests that a lesson in the content areas begin with a visualizing activity in which all participants do or observe Such an activity in science can be a time proven demonstration which students help with and observe — for example a boiling water in a metal container from which the screw top has been removed but after the water has boiled removing the can from the heat source and immediately screwing back the lid Having observed young learners happened Brandwein recommends that the teacher circulate among participants during the writing down phase assisting slow learners recording their observations He also recommends having available related textual material and dictionaries so that young people can check words they are writing With very slow youngsters it sometimes pays to put on the board key procedural words to use in written summaries in this case words such as *hot plate boil metal container and water* and to make first experiences with writing down summaries a group one with summaries recorded on charting paper

The next portion of the lesson is dedicated to oral sharing and discussion with participants first reading their summary statements of procedures and observations and hypothesizing why what happened occurred Participants come to the board to draw diagrams that explain why They record words such as *pressure relative partial vacuum evaporate condense molecules space* on chart or board as they figure out relationships for themselves by talking together When discussion time is over and the fundamental relationships have been perceived and clarified students return to their notebooks to record a summary of why things happened while the teacher circulates and chats with slower children who have trouble recording on paper and who need help in organizing their notebooks

Follow up time is spent in reading textual material relating to the concept and in which vocabulary developed through discussion is



Read Harry Forgan and Charles Mangrum. *Teaching Content Area Related to Reading Skills* (Columbus Ohio Charles Merrill 1976) Check also Leo Fay and Ann Jared *Reading in the Content Fields* revised (Newark Delaware International Reading Association 1975) — an annotated bibliography

found in print During silent individual reading the teacher works with those who need help in writing down summaries and in getting meaning from the written text Brandwein considers the individual visit the key to the success of this language content sequence as he has used it for through personal attention from the teacher the slow learners gradually gain confidence in their ability and a degree of proficiency in carrying out language tasks so fundamental to future success both in school and in society

Dr Brandwein's sequence for involving slow learners simultaneously in content area study and language learning is essentially 1 *do* an activity 2 *discuss* relationships 3 *then read* — at each step of the way *writing* down a summary of understandings Although Brandwein experimented with this approach more than twenty years ago his work is equally valuable today especially with the trend in the sciences and social studies for young people to be directly involved in discovery and to be active inquirers after knowledge Today young people are carrying out simple experiments individually and in groups are demonstrating principles to one another, and are going out into natural environments to find out If writing down reading and discussion are made integral components of such firsthand investigation students will come away not only with increased investigative skills but with heightened language facility based on direct experience

**The Language Different** There are two groups of language different children speakers of a nonstandard dialect and those whose first language differs from that spoken in the schools As was pointed out in chapter 2 considerable controversy exists on how best to assist children who do not speak standard English Most agree however that a language development program for the language different should include

- open and sincere respect for the child's culture and home language or dialect
- extensive firsthand experience as a base for oral interaction extensive oral work to develop a functional speaking listening English vocabulary
- oral use by the teacher of standard forms to serve as a model for children
- oral work with basic sentence patterns and sentence building operations to develop syntactic sense
- oral work with the rhythmic patterns of English

Chapter 2 has treated in detail some of the general issues and approaches to teaching the language different Specific approaches leading to vocabulary and syntactic growth include the following activities described previously in the chapters indicated

- 1 CLOZE inserting many words for one deleted from a sentence repeating the same sentence pattern as a result (see chapter 11)
- 2 Expansions adding words at key spots in a sentence (see chapters 8 9 and 11)

- 3 Transformations transforming kernel sentences into questions, exclamations, negative statements (see chapters 8 and 9)
- 4 Sentence Building creating sentences from subject and predicate parts (see chapter 8)
- 5 Compounding combining two kernel sentences into one sentence (see chapter 8)
- 6 Rhythmic Interpretations expressing sentences with typical English rhythm patterns (see chapters 5 and 11)

**The Hearing Impaired** In regular classrooms are children whose hearing is impaired to an extent such that it interferes with normal language learning and oral participation. With regard to hearing impaired children, the teacher has a twofold responsibility: 1 to identify those youngsters who could conceivably suffer an impairment and 2 to aid them in learning despite their handicap.

Behaviors that may be clues to some loss of hearing include speaking in a very loud voice, repeating questions or answers already given, inability to distinguish certain language sounds and perhaps to make these sounds clearly, and using a tape recorder at a high volume. Children who a teacher suspects might suffer an impairment should be referred to the school health services for diagnostic testing.

Authorities advocate use of specific procedures when working with the hearing impaired in regular classrooms (after Keaster, in Johnson et al., 1967)

- seating the child where he/she can see teacher lip movements not standing before a strong light source that might prevent the child from observing moving lips
- forming children's chairs into circles during talk-times so that the deaf child can see other participants
- lips, refraining from talking while one's back is turned,
- talking clearly and naturally in full sentences
- writing important directions on the board, rephrasing directions to help the deaf child perceive meaning,
- allowing the child to move around the room to be where he/she can hear best,
- encouraging the child to participate in oral interaction

Learning to speak, read, and spell poses problems for the hard of hearing. Phonics, which relies on perception of differences in sounds, may be a physical impossibility for some, requiring greater reliance on use of contextual clues, sight words, and structural analysis. Tactile, kinesthetic, and visual techniques for learning to spell gain in significance over linguistic approaches that stress sound/symbol relationships. For some, speaking is a parallel problem with some distortions of speech sounds occurring because the youngster cannot hear the sounds clearly.

In most if not all cases, hearing impaired children integrated into regular classes have a loss less than total; they have some hearing at one or more frequencies. According to Lowenbraun and Scroggs (in Haring, 1975), this residual hearing can be amplified with hearing aids and used to facilitate interpretation and production of speech. Individ-

(continued from p. 466)  
 Under must respond in complete sentences. No it is not in the desk. Yes it is under the table.  
 2. Literature-based experiences such as encouraging children who have heard Dr. Seuss's *And To Think I Saw It on Mulberry Street* to talk about what they saw on the streets as a means of practicing usage of see/saw.

dualization is necessary, with the child being guided through an instructional sequence beginning with recognition of gross sounds and leading to ability to discriminate phonemes that look alike when formed on the lips — phoneme groups such as /p/, /b/, and /m/, /t/, /d/, and /n/, and /s/ and /z/. To assist the hard of hearing in producing difficult phoneme sounds, many schools make available a speech therapist, who can also help the teacher by providing suggestions, materials, and information on how to adjust the program to meet the needs of the hearing impaired.

**The Visually Impaired.** Just as some hearing loss has impact on a child's ability to interpret and produce language, so a loss of visual acuity can have an effect. Often it is the elementary school teacher who first recognizes a possible impairment by observing that a child bends the head down to the desk or holds a book up near the eyes when reading, squints at the board, rubs the eyes, covers one eye, blinks excessively, and/or thrusts the body forward to see. Then too a youngster may complain that he/she cannot see board writing or complain of blurriness while reading. A teacher should refer a child exhibiting a combination of these symptoms immediately to the parent and to the school health service for eye examination, notwithstanding the provision by some communities of free annual examination for each child.

Children with some vision loss, especially a loss that cannot be corrected with glasses, can be helped by —

- placement near the board,
- instruction in small groups, clustered around an easel where words are written clearly in large print,
- use of a reader-mate, who reads work-directions printed on exercise sheets or board,
- use of paper, the lines of which have been darkened for the visually impaired learning to print, use of darkened handwriting models, use of raised letter models in learning to write,
- use of hearing, feeling, touching rather than washed out pictures as a stimulus to speaking and writing,
- preparation of special materials such as tests and exercises in large print, dictation of test questions,
- provision of large print versions of written materials such as the *New York Times* for use by older children
- provision of charting paper on which to write down individual stories in large print

**The Speech Impaired.** There are four kinds of speech impairments — articulation disorders, stuttering, phonation problems and delayed or limited speech development. In most school systems, a speech therapist has direct responsibility for helping the speech impaired, the teacher's responsibility lies mainly in identifying youngsters with problems and in providing a relaxed, open, and language-interesting environment that encourages children to speak.

**Articulatory Disorders** According to McClean (in Haring, 1974) articulation disorders are the most frequent communication problems of



Upper graders will appreciate the problems of others with visual impairments through

James Garfield *Follow My Leader* (New York: Viking, 1957)



Helping children to articulate clearly

children. Some youngsters substitute one sound for another in speaking, as in using the /w/ for the /r/ to produce *wed wose*, or the /t/ for the /k/ to produce *a tite* rather than *a kite*, or the /d/ for the /t/ or /th/ to produce *drain* for *train* and *dat* for *that*. Some youngsters omit sounds, especially ones they find too difficult to produce and/or ones they do not hear. Final consonant sounds are commonly omitted in speaking, with a few youngsters having no final consonant sounds at all. A third form of articulatory disorder is the distortion. The /s/ is commonly distorted, accompanied by extraneous hissing or whistling sounds.

Speech specialists suggest two causes of articulatory disorders — faulty learning of the English sound system and physical problems that prevent the production of language sounds. In the first case, therapists provide instruction on exactly how each sound is produced and are rather successful in remediating the problem. Speech disorders related to physical functioning, as would be the case when children have cerebral palsy, cleft palate, motor dysfunction, severe hearing loss are less easily corrected, requiring complex treatment by trained specialists.

**Stuttering** Stuttering is a speech disorder accompanied in its most severe state by exaggerated physical behavior — gasping for air, convulsions of the face, blinking the eyes, tensing of the body. Many children between ages three and five typically repeat speech sounds, and adults often repeat in speaking. This is normal speaking behavior. Somehow from normal speaking behaviors, severe stuttering develops with all the physical manifestations associated with what specialists call *secondary-type stuttering*. Although it is not entirely clear why and how secondary stuttering develops, it is considered a learned behavior with attempts to avoid stuttering being held responsible to some extent for the development of accompanying physical behaviors.

Read "An Open Letter to the Mother of a Stuttering Child" in Johnson et al. *Speech Handicapped School Children*, 3d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

**Phonation Problems** Vocal disorders include problems related to intensity, pitch, quality, and rhythm of the voice. The husky, the monotone, the shrill, the nasal, the too soft voice are all phonation problems. Some are organic in that they result from a faulty mouth, nose, or vocal fold structure. Some are learned through association with parents who speak similarly, some may relate to psychological functioning.

**Retarded Speech Development** A few children in early primary grades exhibit almost no speech at all. By twelve months, they are not speaking the two or three words typical of most young children, by twenty-four months they have not yet begun to put together very simple sentences. Spencer Brown (in Johnson, 1976) suggests that children have retarded speech development if they fall about twelve months behind these norms. Retarded development can result from overall mental retardation, hearing impairment, lack of speech stimulation in the home environment, and severe emotional shock. In Brown's words, children with retarded speech "present some of the most difficult and challenging problems in the whole area of speech pathology."

**Teaching the Speech Impaired** Remediating a severe speech disorder requires specialized training that most elementary school language arts teachers have not had. For this reason, the need for highly qualified speech therapists cannot be overstressed, in school districts where insufficient personnel exists, teachers should work to see that the staff is expanded so every impaired child has access to specialized attention during the week.

In addition, the classroom teacher can provide more generalized attention, especially in lower grades. The teacher can involve children intimately and continually with the sounds of language. Informal conversations between teacher and students help youngsters see how important and pleasant speaking can be. Listening to stories and poems, chorusing and singing songs and rhymes, playing games that require differentiation among sounds heighten children's sensitivity to language sounds. Greater sensitivity can be built through specific language exercises that focus on particular phonemes. Youngsters who have an articulation problem can practice producing different sounds. Much of this specialized activity occurs as part of the reading readiness program through which children acquire auditory discrimination skills. During readiness exercises, the child works on a particular sound or problem with the teacher *not* correcting or pointing out speech errors during general oral conversation activities. Continual correction makes speaking unpleasant and can worsen the problem.

As part of reading during oral interpretation of selections, some attempt can be made to remediate phonation problems. Working within a group, children can vary pitch and loudness and can experiment with different ways to project the voice. Choral speaking is an excellent way to develop vocal control as children together interpret lines of poetry and prose, using pitch, loudness, and tone to communicate meanings.



Young children who are shy when speaking will appreciate Joan Lexau Berne (New York: Dial, 1964).



Other productive activities include creative dramatics, puppet plays, role playing, reading along with a listening-along, and audio-taping.

Stuttering is a more difficult problem for the teacher to handle. Teachers of young children must realize that repeating sounds is typical speaking behavior at this stage. Labeling a child a stutterer and drawing this "condition" to parents' attention may well produce a stutterer from a normal child. Kindergarten teachers in particular should help parents concerned about their child's language development to accept the normal repetitions of youthful speech, encouraging them to talk and listening easily to the youngster.

Perhaps the major contribution a teacher can make to an older child who has already acquired the physical characteristics associated with secondary stuttering is to be patient, giving the youngster sufficient time to contribute and to encourage other children to be patient and thoughtful. All children should be encouraged to participate actively, without interruption. Teachers may be prone to urge children to speak more quickly or more slowly, to stop and start over to take a deep breath. Instructions such as these aggravate the situation and cause a young person with secondary stuttering characteristics to stop contributing. They also may result in aggravated physical mannerisms associated with speaking.

**The Socially and Emotionally Handicapped** The emotionally handicapped encompass a broad range of personality disorders extending from the hyperaggressive who display behaviors such as hitting, pushing, kicking, swearing, and spitting, to the hyperactive who display behaviors such as constantly getting out of line or seat, moving here and there, fiddling, to the withdrawn who make few contacts with others. Because disorders are diverse, few generalizations about personal characteristics or about teaching approaches are possible. And yet youngsters who have trouble interacting socially with others must be dealt with positively by the teacher who wishes to provide an environment where all children can live and learn language happily together.

One of the most productive approaches to socially unacceptable behaviors in the classroom is behavior modification. Allen (1964) offers an example that clarifies the approach which essentially uses positive reinforcement and reward of acceptable units of behavior to decrease production of unacceptable behaviors. In the Allen study, a preschooler withdrew from peer interaction, seeking adult attention by whining and complaining of illness. Observers in the classroom noted that when the youngster exhibited any of the undesirable behaviors, the teacher would attend to her, and when the child finally did join the group interaction, the teacher — satisfied — would tend to other children. Using behavior modification techniques the teacher completely reversed her system of rewards. As the youngster earned out attention-demanding behaviors, the teacher completely ignored them, as she interacted with the peer group, the teacher provided abundant attention. After only a few days the youngster exhibited fewer adult-attention getting behaviors and was interacting much more readily with peers.



Many elementary teachers are beginning to apply behavior modification techniques in their work with inattentive, withdrawn, hyperactive, and hyperaggressive children. They ignore specific deviant behaviors, but as soon as the child does something socially acceptable, that behavior is reinforced. Thus a primary teacher might comment during a class language together session, "Let's all sit up nice and straight like Richard." That teacher, watching children work together in groups, might comment too, "Let's all try to get our voices down at the level of the boys and girls at the art table." In upper grades the teacher might commend a normally inattentive or restless youngster after a discussion in which he/she made a particularly good comment, saying, "That was a great idea you contributed to the discussion. Matt. Did you notice how we used it to go on from there?"

Behavior modification techniques are a bit harder to carry out than to describe. Sometimes behaviors are so disruptive they cannot be ignored, especially when behaviors, if continued, could be harmful to other children. In these cases, the teacher stops the behavior, then waits to talk to the youngster at a time when emotions have cooled, during the interim positively rewarding any productive behaviors that occur. In extreme cases the teacher should consult the school psychologist who may be able to provide additional information on causes for the emotional maladjustment and ways to handle it in the classroom.

### The Exceptional Child in the Regular Classroom — A Summary Thought or Two

Two themes have been developed in this chapter. A major one has been the classroom teacher's role in early identification of intellectual, sensory, speech, and emotional characteristics. Unless the teacher is aware of individual needs and problems affecting language learning, he/she is unable to provide instruction through which all students can grow in communication power. Essential in early identification of exceptional language problems is diagnostic testing. Diagnostic tests provide busy teachers with information on specific oral language and reading skills in which particular children may be deficient, based on this knowledge, teachers structure personalized work and organize classroom learning groups.

Equal in importance to formal diagnostic testing is the personalized conference. Listening to a child read in an individual conference, talking to that child about a composition, listening to the child talk, taking dictation from the child, a teacher can observe a variety of reading, writing, speaking, listening, thinking, and personal behaviors. Strengths and weaknesses observed determine both the kinds of group and individual tasks set forth and the content of those tasks. A teacher can also note problems to be referred to learning specialists within the school — the social worker, the psychologist, the health staff, the reading specialist, the speech therapist, the learning disabilities specialist. In some instances children formerly taught in special education classes can remain in regular classrooms only through the assistance of specialists who come in to work individually or in small groups with children who pose exceptional learning problems. These

Read McGay Vernon and  
Judy Arney "The Honoring  
Plan," *Instructor* 86  
(January 1977) 136-137  
which describes  
a new writing method  
and had of finding  
through use of an  
unprepared dog who  
helps the teacher  
and students stay on sign  
language

specialists assist the teacher also by making contact with parents educating them on how best to help children at home, and by providing information on how best to facilitate the learning of exceptional children in regular classrooms

A second theme of the chapter has been the teacher's role in employing creative teaching techniques to meet individual differences. You may have recognized that in many cases techniques applicable in guiding average learners are useful in work with the exceptional. Techniques such as talking together, oral composition, dictation to the teacher, creative practice through use of word and picture cards, use of concrete materials, reading along while listening, along with sentence expansion and transformation, behavior modification are productive with many children when adapted to take into account differences in attention span, emotional level, and speed of learning. Obviously the complexity of the content, the vocabulary, the time spent, and the general excitement level will differ depending on the group or individual, but it is interesting to note that teachers of special education classes are finding that many of the approaches to language development that experienced language arts teachers are employing so successfully have a role in the education of the exceptional learner.

### Building and Refining Your Teaching Skills

- Devise an activity sequence to involve a group of gifted fourth graders in a sophisticated area of language learning.
- Observe in a special education classroom where there are children who have severe vision or hearing problems. Watch the teacher to see if he/she is using techniques adaptable in a regular classroom.
- Watch a trained speech therapist at work with a child who has an articulation disorder. Are there any techniques used that you could employ with youngsters having speech problems that you find in a regular classroom?
- Discuss with other teachers. Specialists advocate a very calm and unstimulating environment for highly excitable emotionally disturbed children. What problems does this pose for the elementary teacher trying to provide a language rich and stimulating environment for the majority of children? How can the teacher resolve the dilemma?
- Read a book such as Johnson, Brown, Curtis, Edney, and Keaster *Speech Handicapped School Children* 3rd ed. Harper and Row 1967. Many excellent suggestions for the classroom teacher are offered here. Or read Frank Hewett's *Education of Exceptional Learners*. Allyn and Bacon 1974. Donald Hammill and Nettie Barlett's *Teaching Children with Learning and Behavior Problems*. Allyn and Bacon 1975. Samuel Kirk's *Educating Exceptional Children* 2nd ed. Houghton Mifflin 1972-76.

## References

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- Haring, Norris, ed *Behavior of Exceptional Children An Introduction to Special Education* Columbus, Ohio Charles Merrill, 1974 Note particularly the following selections Daniel Peterson's 'Educable Mentally Retarded,' Sheila Lowenbraun and Carolyn Scroggs' 'Hearing Impaired,' James McLean's "Language Development and Communication Disorders"
- Johnson, Wendell, Brown, Spencer, Curtis, James, Edney, Clarence, and Keaster, Jacqueline *Speech Handicapped School Children* 3rd ed New York Harper and Row, 1967
- Kirk, Samuel A *Educating Exceptional Children* 2nd ed Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1976
- Labuda, Michael, ed *Creative Reading for Gifted Learners A Design for Excellence* Newark, Del International Reading Association, 1974
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- Pegnato, W and Birch, J 'Locating Gifted Children in Junior High School' *Exceptional Children* 26 (March 1959) 303-4
- Terman, L M, ed *Genetic Studies of Genius Vols I-V* Stanford, Calif Stanford University Press, 1925-59
- Terman, Lewis M and Merrill, Maud *Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale, Manual for the Third Revision Form L-M* Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1960

# Review: Will You Join The Dance?

"Will you walk a little faster" said a whiting to  
a snail

"There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's treading on my tail"

See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!

They are waiting on the shingle — will you come and join the dance?

Will you won't you will you won't you will you join the dance?

Will you won't you will you won't you won't you join the dance?

*Alice in Wonderland The Lobster Quadrille*

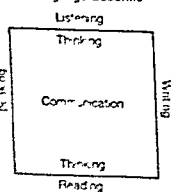
COMMUNICATION IN ACTION DYNAMIC TEACHING OF THE LANGUAGE ARTS is based on the premise that children, through language arts instruction, will acquire increased facility in communicating effectively, develop a love of reading and find delight in books, and come to a heightened understanding of the nature of communication and of the language system they use to communicate meanings. In order to achieve these broad goals, communication in all its dimensions must be an integral part of elementary classrooms, and teachers must be dynamic in their approach toward language arts instruction. A dynamic approach as set forth in this book is one in which there are five major themes: an emphasis on 1 integrating listening, speaking, thinking, writing, and reading into communication-centered experiences, 2 providing sequences of language activities that involve children directly and productively in communicating, 3 using varied instructional techniques that combine oral interaction with independent learning, 4 placing literature experiences at the nucleus of language arts experiences, and 5 drawing on the body of information on language and language acquisition developed by the linguists as a theoretical base upon which to build literature-language experiences for children.

Most surely, success in achieving the goals of language arts instruction through a dynamic approach depends on the dynamics of the teacher. The teacher must be able to —

- perceive the relationships between skill areas and content areas in order to design communication-centered experiences that at some point bring children into pleasurable contact with literature,
- draw from a vast repertoire of activities that can be adapted to a variety of teaching/learning situations
- design creative sequences of activities that flow naturally together and lead to fundamental language learnings
- tap the potential of full class, small group, and individual instruction in organizing experiences for children

In this respect, the teacher of elementary language arts must be a searcher, a creator, and an experimenter — always searching for new

A Language Quadrille



ideas and ways of doing things, always putting together things that were never put together before, and always willing to experiment and learn from successes and mistakes

In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll serves up a piece of advice via the King of Hearts "Begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end; then stop " If Carroll's King had been advising on the dynamics of teaching language arts, he would have had to change his counsel to "Begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end, then keep going " In dynamic teaching of language arts, there is no end

Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you, will you join the dance?  
Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you, wo'n't you join the dance?

Listing of Selected  
Children's Books  
Described in the Text

- Aardema, Verna *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* Dial, 1975  
 Armstrong, William *Souder* Harper and Row, 1969  
 Aruego, Jose and Ariane *The Crocodile's Tale* Scribner's 1972  
 Beim, Lorraine and Herold *Two Is a Team* Harcourt, Brace, 1945  
 Bemelman, Ludwig *Madeline's Rescue* Viking, 1953  
 Brink, Carol *Caddie Woodlawn* Macmillan, 1935  
 Broger, Achim Bruno *Morrow*, 1975  
 Burton, Virginia Lee *The Little House* Houghton Mifflin, 1942  
 Byar, Betsy *Summer of the Swans* Viking, 1970  
 Carle, Eric *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* World Publishing, 1969, *The Rooster Who Set Out to See the World* Franklin Watts, 1972  
 Carnick, Carol and Donald *Swamp Spring* Macmillan, 1969  
 Cooney, Barbara *Chanticleer and the Fox* Crowell, 1958  
 Cormier, Robert *The Chocolate War* Pantheon, 1974  
 Dahlstedt, Marden *The Stopping Place* Putnam, 1976  
 DeRegniers, Beatrice *May I Bring a Friend* Atheneum, 1964, *Something Special* Harcourt Brace, 1958  
 Emberley, Barbara *Dummer Hoff* Prentice-Hall, 1967  
 Emberley, Ed *Punch and Judy* Little, 1965  
 Fox, Paula *The Slave Dancer* Bradbury, 1973  
 George, Jean *Who Really Killed Cock Robin?* Dutton, 1971  
 Ginsburg, Mirra *How the Sun Was Brought Back to the Sky* Macmillan, 1975  
 Go Ask Alice Prentice-Hall, 1971 (anonymous)  
 Grahame, Kenneth *Wind in the Willows* Scribners, 1908, 1940  
 Hall, Lynn *Sticks and Stones* Dell, 1972  
 Hamilton, Virginia *The House of Dies Drear* Macmillan, 1968, *M. C. Higgins the Great* Macmillan, 1974  
 Holland, Isabelle *The Man Without a Face* Lippincott, 1972  
 Keats, Ezra Jack *The Snowy Day* Viking 1962  
 Kerr, Judith *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* Coward, McCann Geoghegan, 1971  
 Kingman, Lee *The Year of the Raccoon* Houghton Mifflin 1966  
 Konigsburg, E. L. *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* Atheneum, 1967, *Jennifer, Hecate, Macbeth* William McKinley and Me Elizabeth Atheneum, 1967  
 L. Engle, Madeline *A Wind in the Door* Farrar Straus 1973 *A Wrinkle in Time* Farrar Straus, 1962  
 Leodhas, Sorche Nic *Always Room for One More* Holt 1965  
 Lindgren, Astrid *Pippi Longstocking* Viking 1950  
 Lionni, Leo *A Color of His Own* Pantheon 1975 *Swimmy* Pantheon, 1968  
*Tico and the Golden Wings* Pantheon 1964  
 Lobel, Arnold *On the Day Peter Stuuvesant Sailed into Town* Harper and Row, 1971  
 Max, Peter *The Land of Blue* Franklin Watts 1970  
 McCloskey, Robert *Homer Price* Viking 1943 *Make Way for Ducklings* Viking 1941 *Time of Wonder* Viking 1957  
 McDermott, Beverly *The Golem* Lippincott 1976

McDermott, Gersld *The Stonecutter* Viking 1975  
 Mendoza George *The Gillygoofang* Dial 19  
 Parnell Peter *The Mountain* Doubleday 1971  
 Ness Evaline *Sam Bangs and Moonshine* Holt 1966  
 Pomerantz Charlotte *The Day They Parachuted Cats on Borneo* Young  
     Scott Books 1971  
 Sendak Maurice *Where the Wild Things Are* Harper and Row 1963  
 Seuss Dr *And to Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street* Vanguard 1937  
 Spier Peter *The Star spangled Banner* Doubleday 1972  
 Travers Pamela *Mary Poppins* Harcourt Brace 1934  
 Vorst Judith *Alexander and the Terrible Horrible No Good Very Bad Day*  
     Atheneum 1972  
 Zemach Harve *Duffy and the Devil* Farrar Straus 1973  
 Zimelman Nathan *The Lives of My Cat Alfred* Dutton 1973

Listing of  
Significant Sources  
of Audio-visual  
Materials  
Helpful in Bringing  
Books and Children  
Together

- Caedmon Records, 505 8th Ave , New York, NY 10018 a source of fine tapes and discs on which have been recorded poetry, prose, and dramatic selections read by master performers and in some instances the author of the selection, examples Walter Brennan reads *Huckleberry Finn*, Carol Channing reads *Madeline*
- McGraw Hill 330 West 42nd St , New York, NY 10036 a supplier of the Bank Street Reading Incentive Films in which well known celebrities read popular children's stories, example Bill Cosby reads *Rich Cat*, *Poor Cat*
- Miller Brody Productions, 342 Madison Ave , New York, NY 10017 a producer of sound filmstrips of Newbery award winning books as well as films of other popular stories
- Scholastic AV Center, 904 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632 a source of paperback books accompanied by records
- Teaching Resources Films, Station Plaza, Bedford Hills, NY 10507 a source of filmstrips with accompanying cassettes, examples a sound filmstrip series on Aesop's fables, a series on the familiar *Amelia Bedelia* books by Peggv Parrish
- Troll Associates, 320 Rt 17, Mahwah, NJ a source of various "read-along" packets comprised of paperbacks and related tapes with titles appropriate for use in grades K 8
- Weston Woods, Weston, CT 06880 a producer of fine films and sound filmstrips including most Caldecott award winning books
- Xerox Films Education Center, P O Box 444, Columbus, OH 43216 a producer of multimedia kits each containing a sound filmstrip, activity booklets, a poster, and a teacher guide and each focusing on a folktale from a particular country



- Aardema, Verna *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* New York Dial, 1975
- Adams, Robert *Watership Down* New York Macmillan, 1972
- Alexander, Martha *Out, Out, Out* New York Dial 1968
- Armstrong, William *Souder* New York Harper and Row, 1969
- Aruego, Jose and Ariane *The Crocodile's Tale* New York Scribner's 1972
- Bach, Richard *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* New York Macmillan 1970
- Barry, Katharina *A Bug Is To Hug* New York Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1964
- Beim, Lorraine and Jerold *Two Is A Team* New York Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1945
- Belelman, Ludwig *Madeline* New York Viking 1939
- Belelman, Ludwig *Madeline's Rescue* New York Viking 1953
- Bishop, Claire *Five Chinese Brothers* New York Coward McCann and Geoghegan, 1938
- Black, Algernon *The Woman of the Wood* New York Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973
- Black, Irma *Busy Water* New York Holiday House, 1956
- Brink, Carol *Caddie Woodlawn* New York Macmillan 1935
- Broger, Achim *Bruno* New York Morrow, 1975
- Brown, Margaret *Seashore Noisy Book* New York Harper and Row, 1941
- Bunting, Eve *Barney the Beard* New York Parents Magazine, 1975
- Burningham, John *Mr Gumpy's Outing* New York Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1971
- Burton, Virginia *The Little House* Boston Houghton Mifflin 1942
- Byars, Betsy *Summer of the Swans* New York Viking 1970
- Cameron, Polly *"I Can't" Said the Ant* New York Scholastic 1969
- Cameron, Polly *The Cat Who Thought He Was a Tiger* New York Coward McCann and Geoghegan, 1956
- Carle, Eric *I See A Song* New York Crowell, 1973
- Carle, Eric *The Mixed Up Chameleon* New York Crowell 1975
- Carle, Eric *The Secret Birthday Message* New York Crowell 1971
- Carle, Eric *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* New York World Publishing 1969
- Carriek, Carol and Donald *Swamp Spring* New York Macmillan, 1969
- Chaconas, Doris *The Way The Tiger Walked* New York Simon and Schuster, 1970
- Charlip, Remy *Fortunately* New York Parents' Magazine Press 1964
- Charlip, Remy *What Good Luck! What Bad Luck!* New York Scholastic 1970
- Cooney, Barbara *Chanticleer and the Fox* New York Crowell 1958
- Cormier, Robert *The Chocolate War* New York Pantheon 1974
- Dahlstedt, Marden *The Stopping Place* New York Putnam 1976
- Dayrell, Elphinstone *Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky* Boston Houghton Mifflin 1968
- DePaola, Tomie *Strega Nona* Englewood Cliffs N.J. Prentice Hall 1975
- De Regniers, Beatrice *May I Bring A Friend* New York Atheneum, 1964

- De Regniers, Beatrice *Something Special* New York Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1958
- Domanska, Janina *If All the Seas Were One Sea* New York Macmillan 1971
- Dougherty, James *Daniel Boone* New York Viking, 1939
- Emberley, Barbara *Drummer Hoff* Englewood Cliffs, N J Prentice-Hall, 1967
- Emberley, Edward *Punch and Judy* Boston Little, Brown, 1965
- Elkin, Benjamin *The Loudest Noise in the World* New York Viking, 1954
- Estes, Eleanor *The Hundred Dresses* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1944
- Ets, Marie Hall *In The Forest* New York Viking, 1944
- Ets, Marie Hall *Play With Me* New York Viking, 1955
- Felton Harold *Mumbet The Story of Elizabeth Freeman* New York. Dodd, Mead, 1970
- Fisher, Aileen *I Wonder How, I Wonder Why* New York Abelard Schuman, 1962
- Flack, Marjorie *Ask Mr Bear* New York Macmillan, 1958
- Flack, Marjorie and Weise, Kurt *The Story About Ping* New York Viking, 1933
- Fox, Paula *The Slave Dancer* Scarsdale, N Y Bradbury, 1973
- Freeman Don *Tillie Witch* New York Viking, 1969
- Funk, Charles *A Hog On Ice and Other Curious Expressions* New York Harper and Row, 1948
- Funk, Charles *Heavens to Betsy and Other Curious Sayings* New York. Harper and Row, 1955
- Gaeddert, Lou Ann *Noisy Nancy and Nick* New York Doubleday, 1970
- Gaeddert, Lou Ann *Noisy Nancy Norris* New York Doubleday, 1965
- Gag, Wanda *ABC Bunny* New York Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1933
- Galdone, Paul *The Horse, the Fox, and the Lion* New York Seabury, 1968
- Galdone, Paul *Henny Penny* New York. Seabury, 1968
- Gardner, John *Dragon, Dragon and Other Tales* New York. Knopf, 1975
- Geisel, Theodore See Dr Seuss
- George, Jean *Who Really Killed Cock Robin* New York Dutton, 1971
- Ginsburg, Mirra *The Chick and the Duckling* New York Macmillan, 1972
- Ginsburg Mirra *How the Sun Was Brought Back to the Sky* New York. Macmillan, 1975
- Ginsburg, Mirra *How Wilka Went to Sea and Other Tales from West of the Urals* New York Crown, 1975
- Go Ask Alice Englewood Cliffs, N J Prentice-Hall 1971
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